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ISSUE 139 · OCTOBER 2006

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ISSUE #139 OCTOBER 2006 VOLUME 20, NO 10

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SAVAGE TIDE ADVENTURE PATH

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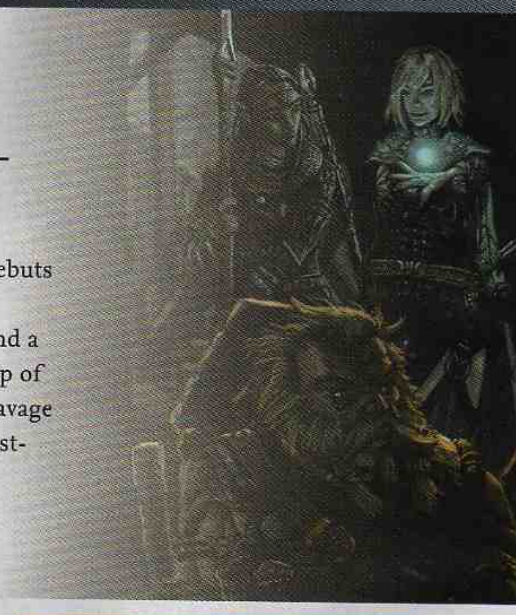
James Jacobs
The Savage Tide Adventure Path debuts as a new band of heroes confronts exotic monsters, undead pirates, and a sinister guild of thieves on the cusp of unleashing a murderous coup. A Savage Tide Adventure Path scenario for 1st-level characters.



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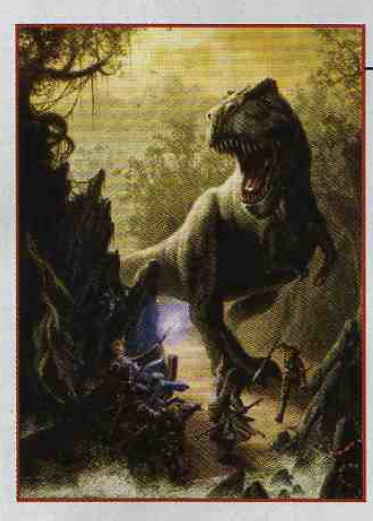
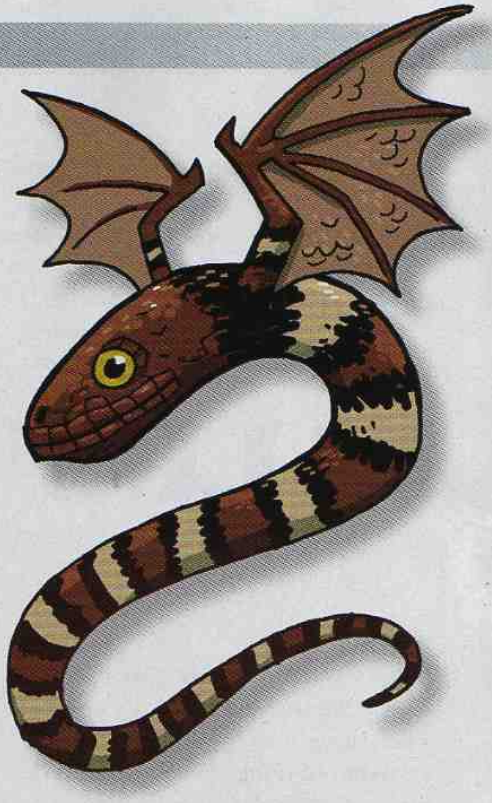
James Jacobs
Discover the streets and canals of the city of Sasserine, the setting for the opening act of the Savage Tide Adventure Path.



ON THE COVER

Dan Scott kicks off the Savage Tide Adventure Path with a reprise of the cover of the classic module *X1: The Isle of Dread.*



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In our Guild, intoxication is no excuse for folly, rather grounds for the extremest penalty. But I'm well aware your organized beggars operate under a laxer discipline. So I'll deign to explain to you, you wee drunken dreamer, that we thieves know well that, behind the scenes, we already rule Lankhmar, Nehwon, all life in sooth—for what is life but greed in action?

Fritz Leiber
"Ill Met in Lankhmar"

DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

Take advantage of the RPGA's Player Rewards program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of *Dungeon*! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 11/30/06.

RPGA NETWORK

Drop by rpga.com for more details, and use the following adventure codes:
There Is No Honor (139NH1DN)
Requiem of the Shadow Serpent (139SS1DN)
The Greater Halls (139GH1DN)

WHO'S THE NEW GUY?

It was the heady year of 1982. Compact discs and the internet came into the world, giving us a preview of things to come. In movie theaters, audiences were packing in to see a wrinkled alien phone home (and sadly ignoring a much angrier alien in John Carpenter's *The Thing*). And in the world of music, Michael turned into a werewolf and Ozzy bit off a bat's head.

But young James Jacobs, well into 5th grade at Point Arena Elementary School, didn't have time for computers (his parents didn't own one) or movies (the local theater rarely played monster movies anyway) or music (although the music video for "Thriller" was pretty cool). He'd found something new to consume his time. He'd discovered DUNGEONS & DRAGONS.

After learning to play the game from my fifth-grade teacher (which is an epic tale in and of itself involving magic-using dwarves and the displacer beast who ruled the Land of the Dead), I got my own copy of the basic rules. In no time, I was designing adventures of my own. A few months later, the expert D&D box introduced me to the *Isle of Dread*, and I made a tremendous discovery—D&D also had dinosaurs!

My obsession with the game grew over the years to come. With only 120 students at Point Arena High School, there weren't always enough people to play the game with, and it often fell to ever-patient family members to serve as players in my dungeons. I remember my dad's halfling thief getting fed up with my sister's human fighter picking on his size and pushing her down a well in "Citadel by the Sea" (from DRAGON #78—that the well in question was infested with yellow mold certainly added an edge to that whole escapade). Or the time I ran my mom through *The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan* and kept track of her score using the tournament tracking sheet (although the gibbering mouther cut that adventure short). Or of writing my first-ever adventure, "The Jungle of Tiboquoboc" (an unabashed rip-off of *Isle of Dread*, but with more dinosaurs).

And then came DUNGEON magazine, and its call for adventures in DRAGON #111. My first proposal, "Soulgorger," got me a friendly rejection letter. My second, "Demon Mountain," did a little better—Roger E. Moore asked for a manuscript before rejecting it. For my third try, I used a gimmick—"Scepter of the Underworld" was a solo adventure. I figured there was a need for these, since certainly there were D&D fans out there who, like me, lived in remote corners of the world where you had to drive an hour just to get to the closest bookstore or fast food restaurant. Turns out, it worked, and at age 14 I had my first D&D adventure published in DUNGEON #12. Yup; the one with the green cows on the cover.

So when I was hired three years ago as DUNGEON's new Associate Editor, I was pretty excited. The Shackled City Adventure Path was in full swing, and I got to help with the redesign and new look of the magazine. Working with Erik has been educational, exciting, and shocking (the themes from "Jem" and "Small Wonder" should never be so readily accessible), and taking over as Editor-in-Chief is hopefully going to be the same (but with better music).

The look of the magazine won't be changing, nor will its commitment to presenting three adventures per issue. But that doesn't mean there's nothing to get excited about in the future. Looking over the magazine's schedule for the next year, there's a lot to anticipate. The big event of the year is the Savage Tide Adventure Path, which begins in this very issue. We'll also be running a three-part Campaign Arc that explores a sinister intrusion from the Far Realm, and there'll be numerous trips to GREYHAWK, the FORGOTTEN REALMS, and EBERRON. Beholder mages and pit fiends. Bank heists and train robberies. Cultists of Mephistopheles and priests of Zargon. Nymph assassins and flying war rhinos.

And of course, pirates and demons and dinosaurs.

James Jacobs
Editor-in-Chief
james.jacobs@paizo.com

Tell us what you think of this issue.

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Check out the *Dungeon* messageboards at paizo.com/dungeon

DUNGEON #136

SHOWDOWN ON THE SHADOW PLANE
DUNGEON
CRASH LANDING
RACE TO SAVE A FALLEN AIRSHIP
BREAK THE SERPENT'S CURSE!
RIDERS ON THE STORM
DISPLACER BEASTS • CHOKERS • SHADOW ELEMENTALS
MONTE COOK'S DUNGEONCRAFT • DOWNER • MT. ZOSON

It was a little strange working on the first issue of *Dungeon* in a year to not feature an Age of Worms adventure—it felt like we were forgetting something the whole time! Fortunately, this issue's adventures were more than up to the task of filling the void.

In "Tensions Rising," Ryan Smalley took us outside of Sharn and into the wilderness of Eberron on a frantic mission to rescue the survivors (and recover important information) from a crashed airship.

"The Coming Storm," by prolific *Dungeon* regular Greg A. Vaughan not only presented an awesome mountain temple, but gave long-time Greyhawk fans their first real look at the mysterious lands of Mur across the sea, including several new monsters (and the triumphant return to D&D of the infamous kamadan!).

Finally, in "Gates of Oblivion," Alec Austin took us to one of the most mysterious planes of the D&D multiverse—the Plane of Shadow. Hope your party's cleric brought along a big helping of *death ward* spells, 'cause you'll need them!

Back issues of *Dungeon* #136 are available at paizo.com.

Prison Mail

Shooting Blanks

While I enjoy *Dungeon* quite a bit, one thing I would love to see added to the magazine (or maybe its big brother, *Dragon*) would be a one- or two-page monthly section dedicated to blank forms and data sheets.

Here are some suggestions:

- A "Transformation data sheet" where the DM or player could assemble stats for a wildshaped druid or polymorphed individual.
- A set of cards to copy important monster/character stats (you did one of these a while back, I'd like to see a better one). These would be useful for initiative orders, environmental skill checks, and saves.
- 3×5-sized forms to jot down key spell information on.
- Similar forms to jot down key magic equipment information on.
- A PC history questionnaire.
- A loot list. You could write down what loot was found, where you got it, and what you did with it.
- A ship's layout (or wagon's layout) that allows the DM to map out where cargo is placed. For example, certain portions of a ship hold more stuff than others.
- A body-slot chart where players and DMs can map out locations of items on characters.

Just brainstorming for ya! Best of luck.

John Simcoe
Mount Wolf, Pennsylvania

These are interesting ideas, John, and while we don't really have room in Dungeon for a recurring "blank form" section, that doesn't mean we won't be doing anything along these liens.

We've started releasing item cards, for example—these little cards are a great way to add a visual flair to a game while making it easy to keep track of exactly who was carrying that portable hole. *The backs of each item card have space for you to write in information about the item—they aren't keyed to specific items, so that sword with the serrated blade could be anything. Check 'em out at paizo.com!*

We're also going to release a product called Campaign Workbook *later this year, which has a LOT of blank forms along these lines within its pages. Between these and the item cards, we might just have you covered! As for ship maps, we've got two in this very issue. And as the Savage Tide Adventure Path continues, you can certainly expect to see more!*

Savage Loot?

The Maps of Mystery have been really awesome lately and I hope you continue the trend. Sideviews, 3D maps, and the unusual environments are useful, attractive, and really appreciated.

The adventures have been top notch, as usual. However, I would prefer to see future adventures organized for clarity. Stat blocks all in one place, for example, would go a long way toward simplifying retrieving information on the fly while running an adventure. Also, long stat blocks that go from one page to another page are very

NEXT MONTH IN DUNGEON

THE BULLYWUG GAMBIT

by Nicolas Logue

Kraken Cove has long served as a place to stage smuggling operations. When a ship's latest cargo backfires, the PCs find themselves faced with something far worse than murderous pirates. A Savage Tide Adventure Path scenario for 3rd-level characters.

GRAYMALKIN ACADEMY

by Mark A. Hart

Prestigious Graymalkin Academy, where the rich go to learn of magic, has fallen to the enemy! Can your PCs defeat its monstrous invaders? A D&D adventure for 9th-level characters.

HEART OF HELLFIRE MOUNTAIN

by "Weird" Dave Olson

It's one thing when fire giants cause problems for civilization, but it's another when the fire giants themselves have a problem that only adventurers can solve! A D&D adventure for 20th-level characters.

OOPS!

In issue #138's "Challenge of Champions VI," we miscredited both the artist and the cartographer. The adventure's artwork was actually by Jeff Laubenstein, and the cartography was by Kyle Hunter. Sorry guys! I promise we'll do better next time!

annoying while running a game. Reading the adventures is one thing—I think they could possibly be better organized or presented to make running an adventure gaming session easier.

Is there any possibility we might see any Paizo products related to the Savage Tide Adventure Path? I would love to see map packs, *Compleat Encounters*, and magic item cards specifically tailored for those future adventures. I haven't purchased any of the *Compleat Encounter* products yet, mainly because I am horrible at painting miniatures, but if Paizo was to publish a Savage-Tide-related series of map packs, encounters, and item packs, I'd be very inclined to purchase them. A map pack of a ship deck plan would be particularly well received.

Stefan Happ
El Paso, TX

Ah, stat blocks. Such terrors you bring! I've considered grouping these trouble-makers at the end of the adventure (or even at the end of the magazine), but that creates a whole new set of problems, primarily with layout, art placement, advertisement placement, and increased page flipping during play. What do you, the readers, think? Would it be better to have all stat blocks grouped in one place? Or is the current solution the best compromise?

Things look better on the Savage Tide product front. We'll be releasing a product called the Savage Tide Player's Guide, *which players in this campaign can use to help build their characters and to familiarize themselves with the city of Sasserine where the campaign begins. It's a 16-page gazetteer-style view of the city, complete with a two-panel map of the city (available in this very issue as a poster). Beyond this, we do have a few ideas for additional Savage Tide-themed accessories and products, but it's still a bit too early to reveal what they are.*

Conflict Resolution

I liked issue #136—it was fun to read through, and I would like to hold up the first adventure as proof that material specific to a campaign world isn't an impediment to using the adventure. When I read "Tensions Rising," I immediately thought, "Hm... skyship, crash, arcane caster for a captain? I

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Medium Purple - Charmed
Light Blue - Levitation, Feather Fall
Medium Blue - Flying 5 Feet High
Dark Blue - Flying 20 Feet High
Dark Green - Diseased, Cursed
Light Green - Acid
Medium Green - Poisoned
Light Brown - Attack/Damage Modifier
Medium Brown - Armor Class Modifier
Dark Brown - Shape Changed
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NEXT MONTH IN DRAGON

VARIANT VAMPIRES
by Michael J. Montesano
Bring new terror to the night with these three blood-sucking fiends.

BESTOWED CURSES
by Jonathan Drain
Make the heroes pay with these alternate curses.

HORRORS OF THE DAELKYR
by Nicholas Herold
The twisted nightmares of Xoriat return with 6 new monsters.

CORE BELIEFS: VECNA
by Sean K Reynolds & Samuel D. Weiss
Necromancer master, lich tyrant, and secretive god, only the most depraved kneel at the Spidered Throne to uncover the dread secrets of the Maimed Lord.

PLUS!
The first installment of the Savage Tidings Adventure Path tie-in, the Ecology of the Wight, Spells of Ravenloft, Class Acts, First Watch, Sage Advice, and comics, including The Order of the Stick.

could convert this to a Halruuan skyship for the FORGOTTEN REALMS."

I also liked the "The Coming Storm" and managed to come up with some ideas for converting this one to run in the mountains outside of Rashemen in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, using the raiders as Tuigan horse barbarians trapped in the temple cursed by the Wyclaran of Rashemen, and the monks as pilgrims from Tabot in Kara-Tur.

"Gates of Oblivion" was a fun "non-specific" adventure that could be fun to plop into any setting, especially since the Plane of Shadows is the main 3.5 way to traverse the worlds.

All in all, this was a fun issue that generated a lot of ideas.

KinghtErrantJR
Via Messageboard

Show Yourselves!

Is there any chance of expanding the magazine into including additional adventures each month? What about adventures using non-core mechanics? Can we get a group photo? (And no hiding behind rulebooks and papers! I found my copy of DUNGEON that had Erik Mona in it...)

Lilith
Via Messageboard

For now, we're pretty much locked in to the 3-adventures-a-month format, and even then, we often have a heck of a time getting everything to fit. Fortunately for this month, Monte Cook's on vacation from Dungeoncraft (never fear, it'll return next issue!), which got us a few more pages to work with. As for non-core mechanics, if you're asking about things like incarnum, psionics, and epic content, we need to have adventures like these submitted first before we can publish them. (And yes, that's a hint!)

As for a group photo, I'll see what I can do. No promises, though, since Erik's tougher to catch on film than a live chupecabra!

Retreading the Dread

As I bought issue #136 I was quite anxious to see how DUNGEON goes back to "normal" (a pretty weak attribute for anything within these pages) after the grand finale of the Age of Worms Adventure Path. I was quite pleased to see so much high quality content inside, with no sign of it being a "filler" issue between Adventure Paths. My favorite was "The Coming Storm" by Greg A. Vaughan. Great story, and great artwork, too! I really liked the "scorned" template. The critical threat by Ashavan Doyon was the best I've seen in months—a highborn noble obsessed with necromancy pretending to be a vampire was just great. I really like how she keeps the charade up with potions and magic items. I plan on using her sometime in one of my campaigns, but she really should think twice when dealing with my overly paranoid players!

Regarding the coming Savage Tide Adventure Path, I have a question: I read somewhere that about one third of the AP will be situated on the Isle of Dread. Do we have to expect to see some kind of reprint of the Isle Of Dread backdrop or the poster map from issue #114? I guess you can't just reference to this issue because it would be a bummer for readers that got into DUNGEON later, but to reprint this information would be boring for readers that have been loyal to the mag for years. I'd really like to know how you'll solve this problem. And will Savage Tide have a main artist like Steve Prescott was for AoW? He did an awesome job. To end this, let me say thanks for this great magazine. It's better than ever before, and I really enjoy reading it every month. Keep up the good work.

Andree Diekmann
Hamburg, Germany

The Isle of Dread backdrop from issue #114 will certainly be helpful in expanding the adventures in Savage Tide that are set there, but we'll be reprinting enough of it in the context of the adventures themselves that it won't be necessary to play. We're also looking at doing some sort of poster of the Isle that'll serve more as a player's handout than a DM's map, but for the most part the adventures will be self-contained.

As for the art of Savage Tide—we've got Ben Wootten and Warren Mahy scheduled to tackle all of the art for our new Adventure Path. What I've seen so far of their work for the adventures has really blown me away, so I think they'll be more than up to the task—they seemed to do a pretty good job on the design for King Kong *and* Lord of the Rings, *after all!* —James Jacobs

Savage Tide

There Is No Honor

The first savage tide has already touched the mortal world, yet none who live today recall this time of red ruin. Unleashed from the cruel heart of a fell seed known as a *shadow pearl*, this savage tide swept over an ancient city perched atop the crown of a remote island. The tide transformed beggar and noble, merchant and thief, resident and visitor into feral, ravenous fiends. The fruits of centuries of labor came crumbling down in a matter of days, and when the survivors tried to stem the tide by destroying the pearl, the resulting blast of power sunk their city into a boiling lake of death. Through it all, the Abyssal architect of the savage tide watched, taking pride in the ruin. When the tide's final ripples had faded, what was left became known as the Isle of Dread.

Now, after a thousand years, the true masters of the Isle of Dread look upon new targets, new cities beyond the horizon, compelled by the hateful will of their demonic lord Demogorgon to prepare for the coming glory. This time, the doom will not be limited to one hapless city. This time, all of civilization waits unknowing on the shore, blissfully ignorant of what the incoming tide brings in.

"There Is No Honor" is the first chapter of the Savage Tide Adventure Path, a complete campaign consisting of 12 adventures that will appear in the next twelve issues of *Dungeon*. For additional aid in running this campaign, check out *Dragon*'s monthly "Savage Tidings" articles, a series that helps players and DMs prepare for and expand upon the campaign. Issue #348 of *Dragon* kicks off this series with details on six affiliations based in Sasserine that your players may wish to join. And if you're running Savage Tide in the Forgotten Realms or Eberron, make sure to check paizo.com for the latest conversion notes for each adventure.

BY JAMES JACOBS
BY BEN WOOTTEN
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI

ADVENTURE PATH | LOW LEVEL (1ST–5TH) | URBAN AND DUNGEON CRAWL

PLAYTESTED BY MARVIN CRIPPEN, STEVE ENEMARK, ERIC HADDOCK, JASON NELSON-BROWN, MATT ROSSI, AND PAT RYAN

Adventure Background

The city of Sasserine is still finding its feet after emerging from a century of oppressive rule during which the traditional thieves' guilds were destroyed. Dozens of minor guilds now squabble for control of the city's underworld. One guild in particular has risen above the infighting, and is now poised to become a major player in city politics. This is the Lotus Dragons, a band of murderers, burglars, and smugglers led by a charismatic and ambitious woman named Rowyn Kellani—a woman who just happens to be the daughter of one of the city's noble families. When Rowyn enters an alliance with the scion of another noble family, a scoundrel named Vanthus Vanderboren, the final piece of her plan falls into place and she prepares to seize control of the city's sea trade.

Yet for all of her scheming and plotting, Rowyn's capacity for evil and cruelty pales in comparison to that of her new lover. Vanthus, in an attempt to prove his value and worth to the Lotus Dragons (and to impress its beautiful guildmistress), recently committed a horrendous crime. Knowing his parents had just purchased a new ship and were planning on taking a relaxing trip up the coast, he smuggled a dozen barrels of alchemist's fire into the ship's hold and arranged for an "accident." The resulting fire burned the ship to the waterline and left its crew (and Vanthus's parents) dead.

Alas, his plan to inherit his estate (and then use its resources to bolster the Lotus Dragons) fell through when a reading of his parents' will revealed that the estate was to be passed along entirely to his older sister Lavinia. Seething with rage but unwilling to take drastic action against his sister, Vanthus did what he could to rob the family vault before she could claim its riches. Fortunately, he was able to make off with enough money to ensure his place in the guild—and after he abandoned the competition in a series of undead-haunted smuggler's tunnels, his position high in the Lotus Dragon's ranks was ensured.

Now, the Lotus Dragons are ready to act on their nefarious plans. The only thing they aren't counting on is Lavinia Vanderboren's concern for her missing brother.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventure begins as the PCs gather at Vanderboren Manor. Lavinia asks the PCs to aid her in securing access to her family's vault, the key to which is hidden on her father's ship. Once her estate is in order, Lavinia turns her attention to her true concern.

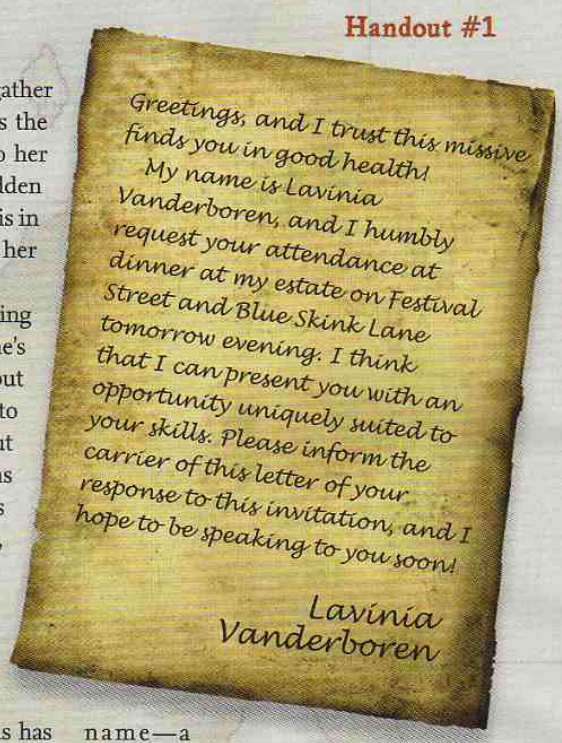
Her brother Vanthus has been missing for weeks. She's heard rumors that he's fallen in with some unsavory types, but hopes he can be convinced to return to civilized society. She sends the PCs out on his trail, and their investigations lead them to a small smuggler's complex under Parrot Island. There, Vanthus springs a trap and locks them in the tunnels. forcing the PCs to navigate an escape while dealing with the hungry undead that dwell within. They eventually emerge, having learned that Vanthus has taken up with a much more dangerous thieves' guild called the Lotus Dragons.

After locating the guildhouse, the PCs discover the guild is preparing to take control of the city's sea trade. By defeating the Lotus Dragons, the PCs can save Sasserine's harbor from falling under the control of a band of murderous scoundrels. Alas, Vanthus is nowhere to be found, although clues send the PCs onto his trail (and into the next adventure in the series—"The Bullywug Gambit").

Adventure Hook

During character creation, ask each player to come up with a notable recent event in his character's life that might mark him as an adventurer. "There Is No Honor" begins as Lavinia Vanderboren, on the hunt for affordable help of an adventurous nature, hears about these exploits. Each PC receives a letter, hand-delivered by a wizened-looking halfling woman named Kora. The contents of the letter appear as Handout #1.

Handout #1


Greetings, and I trust this missive finds you in good health!
My name is Lavinia Vanderboren, and I humbly request your attendance at dinner at my estate on Festival Street and Blue Skink Lane tomorrow evening. I think that I can present you with an opportunity uniquely suited to your skills. Please inform the carrier of this letter of your response to this invitation, and I hope to be speaking to you soon!
Lavinia Vanderboren

PART ONE: A NOBLE IN NEED

Once the PCs receive their invitations to Vanderboren Manor, they may wish to ask around about their new patron. It's only a DC 10 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check to recognize the Vanderboren name—a DC 15 check is enough to know that Lavinia is the eldest daughter of the family. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) check is enough to recall news of a tragic fire a month ago that claimed the lives of Verik and Larissa Vanderboren. The Vanderborens were survived by their two children, Lavinia and Vanthus.

Vanderboren Manor is located in the eastern section of the Merchant District; the seven-foot-high stone wall that surrounds the estate is impossible to miss, as is the towering, gothic, three-story house that dominates the grounds within. Leering gargoyles and capering nymphs festoon the eaves of the manor's roof, and several trees give the manor grounds a nice buffer from the bustle of the city.

The front gates have been left open for the PCs, but no one greets them until they reach the front door and knock. After a few moments, the same wizened halfling woman answers the door. This is **Kora Whistlegap** (LG female halfling expert 3). She thanks the PCs for arriving on time and asks them to wait in the atrium, claiming Lady Vanderboren shall be with them shortly.

At some point after the last PC has arrived but before they are called into the private dining hall, four figures emerge from the hall and head toward the PCs. Kora races behind these figures, which

include a jaunty male half-elf dressed in leather armor and armed with a half-dozen daggers of different shapes, a dark-skinned dwarf with a sour expression dressed in green and brown robes and clutching a large curved spear, an attractive but haughty-looking woman dressed in dark purple robes and with a tattoo of a crescent moon on one cheek, and lastly, a tall and handsome man dressed in polished breastplate carrying a bastard sword.

These are the Jade Ravens, a mercenary company that's been in the Vanderboren employ for several years. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) check recognizes the group. The leader of the group is the man in the breastplate, **Tolin Kientai** (LN male human ranger 3). The others include **Zan Oldavin** (N male half-elf rogue 3), **Kaskus Kiel** (LN male dwarf druid 3), and **Liamae Teslikaria** (CN female human sorcerer 3). Lavinia has been relying more and more upon this group, but she suspects that their loyalty to her family name will only last as long as she can afford to pay them, even though she also suspects (correctly) that Tolin has grown quite attracted to her lately. The mercenaries have little time or interest in the PCs now, although Tolin does stop to size up the PCs for a moment before announcing, "Hmm. You must be the help Lavinia's bringing in to do the chores. Best of luck to ya!" Lavinia has asked the Jade Ravens to travel south to the city of Cauldron to contact her aunt and uncle for aid, and they are anxious to be on their way. The Jade Ravens play a more important role in adventures to come in this campaign—this encounter should merely foreshadow these events.

Lavinia

Talking to Lavinia

The private dining hall is comfortable and cozy, softly lit by wall-mounted lanterns. A window overlooks the manor's central courtyard and the carpet is thick and soft. A large portrait hangs on the wall, a fine work depicting a handsome young man with a short beard. Standing before the portrait is an attractive human woman wearing a long, flowing blue dress. She smiles as the PCs enter, introducing herself as Lavinia Vanderboren.

"As you may have heard, I recently inherited my parents' estate. Along with this fine house, unfortunately, came a fine amount of debt owed the Dawn Council, the harbormaster, and quite a few guildhalls. It seems my parents, for all their success as adventurers, were not as skilled at finance as one might expect. If I'm to get these taxes paid, I'll need to access my family's vault under Castle Teraknian.

"And that's the problem, you see. The vaults are magically locked—keyed to special signet rings. Both of my parents had these rings, at least, until recently. My mother lost hers a few months ago. She arranged for a replacement, but it won't be done for another month or so, too late for me. Which leaves my father's ring. He never wore it—he had a thing about men wearing jewelry. He kept it hidden somewhere on his ship, the *Blue Nixie*. The problem there is that the harbormaster's seized the ship until someone pays for the last four months of mooring. I've paid the fines to the man the harbormaster's put in charge of my ship, a brute named Soller Vark. Yet when I went to claim my ship, Vark's men wouldn't let me board, claiming that I hadn't yet paid the fines. I spoke to Vark again and he denied ever receiving my payment. My complaints to the harbormaster have fallen on deaf ears—he's a doddering old fool who trusts his man and won't relent.

"Vark and his men are up to something on my ship, I know it. What I need is to find out exactly what they're up to. Unfortunately, Vark's not the type to react well to diplomacy or logic. I need someone who speaks his language... which is where you come in. If you can find out what he's using my ship for, or even better, recover the money I paid him, I'll pay each of you 200 gold in return once I've access to my vault."

Her presentation over, Lavinia is open to specific questions. Some likely ones the PCs may have for her (and her responses) follow.

"Is there no one else you can go to for resolution? The city watch, perhaps?" Lavinia admits she approached the watch and the government with her complaints, but unfortunately she has no proof of wrongdoing. She also admits it was foolish to hand over the money to Vark without allied witnesses, but what's done is done. The city watch has promised to look into the matter, but without proof, the investigation takes a back seat to other, more pressing matters.

"There could be trouble—are you prepared for the repercussions?" Lavinia's jaw sets; she asks the PCs to do their best not to throw the first punch if it comes to it, but in the end, why would Vark's men put up a fight unless they were up to no good? It's her ship, after all!

"Can you come with us?" Lavinia would rather not involve herself; if things go poorly, she'd like to maintain public distance from possible ramifications. Furthermore, she's hardly an adventuring type—her strengths lie in diplomacy, and this approach has already proven useless against Vark.

"We want more than 200 gold as payment." Lavinia nods at requests for more money, and can go as high as 300 gp each. She even hints that she has other employment offers in mind for the PCs at a later date, but until she finds out just how much her parents stashed in the

family vault, she's hesitant to promise more than 300 gp per PC.

"Who's that portrait of?" Lavinia pauses for a moment before revealing that the portrait is of her brother Vanthus. A DC 20 Sense Motive check reveals that she seems distraught when the topic comes up, but at this time she has nothing to say about her brother other than that he's "left town."

What happened to your parents?" Such a direct question takes Lavinia aback. After she takes a moment to gather her thoughts, she says in a quiet voice that they burned to death in a ship fire in the harbor about a month ago—they were taking the recently purchased ship for a cruise when something caused the ship to catch fire and burn to the waterline. There were no survivors.

LAVINIA VANDERBOREN **CR 2**
Female elite human aristocrat 2
NG Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Elven, Halfling

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11
hp 14 (2 HD)
Fort +1, **Ref** +1, **Will** +2

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk rapier +2 (1d6/18–20)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +1
Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds, potion of resist fire*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 15
Feats Negotiator, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)
Skills Appraise +7, Diplomacy +16, Gather Information +9, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +7, Perform (stringed instrument) +7, Sense Motive +6
Possessions combat gear, masterwork rapier, *ring of protection +1*, gold earrings (100 gp each), jade ring (80 gp)

PART TWO: TROUBLE ON THE BLUE NIXIE

Sasserine's Harbormaster, Keltar Islaran, is in sorry shape. Slowly succumbing to a chronic lung infection and saddled with sons and daughters uninterested or incapable of taking up the family traditions, Lord Islaran is coming to terms with the fact that he may need to pass the duties of Harbormaster to another of Sasserine's families. The very idea sickens him, consuming his thoughts by day and dreams by night. Ironically, it is his search and obsession with finding a replacement that lives up to his impossible-to-meet standards that has allowed what he feared to occur. Sasserine's harbor is falling under the control of smugglers, bandits, and thieves.

Lord Islaran's few remaining loyal employees have their hands full keeping the city harbor under control without exposing how precarious things actually are to the Dawn Council and the public. As such, they've been forced to hire out for certain tasks, and don't have time to handle relatively minor complaints and issues—such as the issues that surround Lavinia's ship, the *Blue Nixie*. Attempts to learn more meet in endless bureaucracy and red tape. If the PCs want to solve the problem, they'll need to take the law into their own hands.

Vanthus

The Blue Nixie (EL 3+)

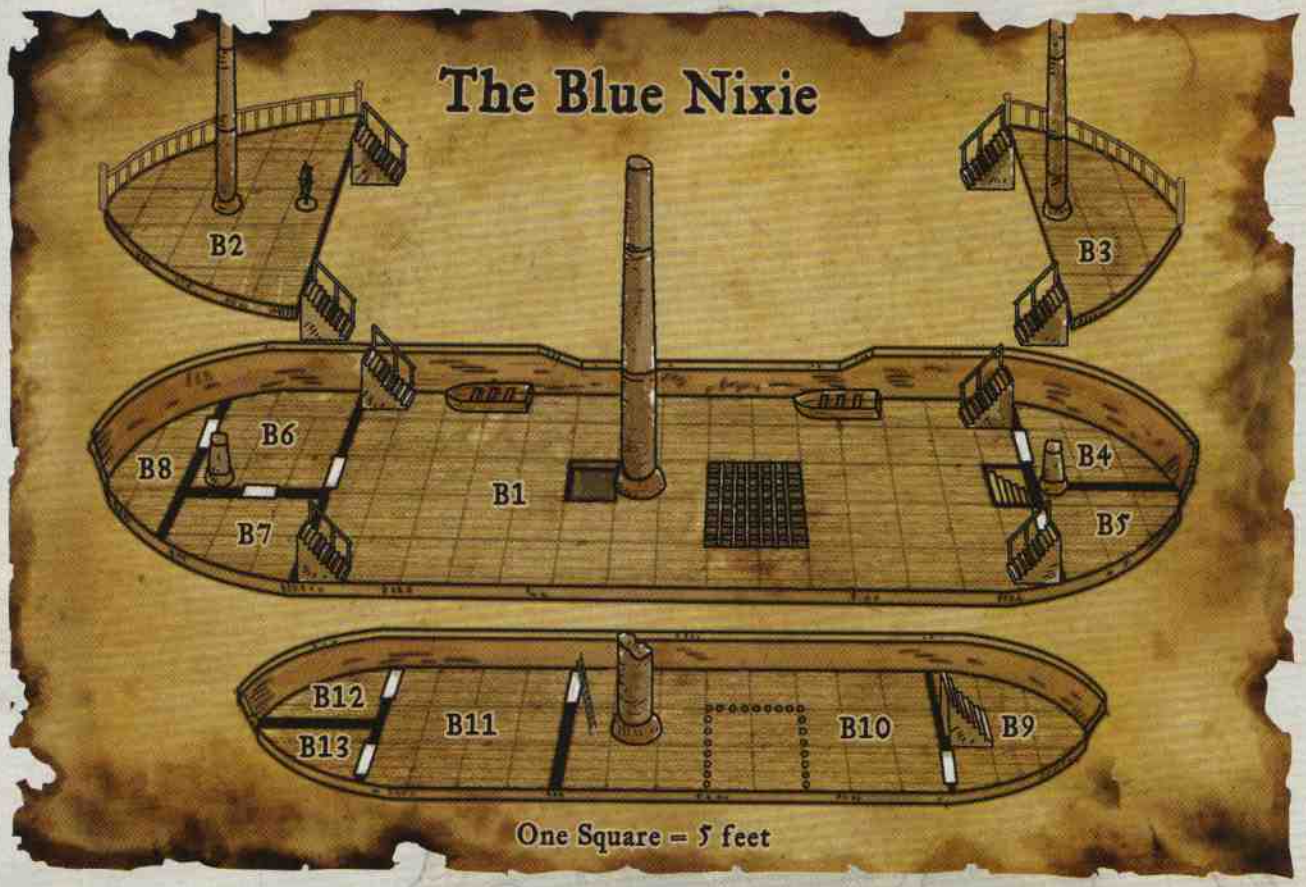
According to Lavinia, the *Blue Nixie*'s docked at pier five in the Merchant District—this pier is the long one between the Merchant's Guildhall (area **F3** on the Sasserine map) and the Smith's Guildhall (area **F4**). Alas, upon arrival it becomes apparent that the *Blue Nixie* is not docked at the pier at all, but is in fact moored to a float about 100 feet from the pier's end.

Soller Vark is indeed up to no good, and by mooring the impounded ship in the harbor he hopes to limit access to its hold. Vark and his thugs have recently come into the possession of a large number of exotic animals, but the true prize of this catch is a fully grown spider-like monster called a rhagodessa he purchased from the Lotus Dragons. The animal smugglers loaded their cargo onto the *Blue Nixie*, figuring it was a better hiding place than a waterfront warehouse, and are scheduled to transfer the animals to a ship heading north at midnight tonight.

Creatures: There are eight smugglers on board the *Blue Nixie*—seven male and female human thugs and Soller Vark. During the day, their positions are as noted in the *Blue Nixie* Key sidebar. After dark, all seven thugs are mobile as they prepare the ship for their rendezvous a mile west of the city.

The thugs have orders to let no one on board, and fear Vark too much to listen to diplomacy. A successful Intimidate check cows the thugs enough that they'll let up to two people on board while one of them heads in to area **B8** to rouse Vark. Otherwise, they began hollering for Vark as soon as any of the PCs attempt to board the *Blue Nixie* or draw weapons.

Soller Vark is a disagreeable bald man with a jagged scar running down one arm, a wound he sustained in a bar fight but which he claims was gifted to him in a battle with a hook-handed pirate. Vark's prone to making flamboyant attacks to suit his inflated sense of style; he'll often attempt to disarm or bull rush foes even when such actions aren't tactically sound.



Vark's Thugs (7) **CR 1/2**
Male and female human warrior 1
CN Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13
hp 8 (1 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +0 **Will** –1

Spd 30 ft.
Melee rapier +2 (1d6+1/18–20)
Ranged light crossbow +1 (1d8/19–20)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Abilities Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8
Feats Lightning Reflexes, Toughness
Skills Intimidate +3, Swim +3
Possessions leather armor, buckler, rapier, light crossbow with 10 bolts, 5 gp

Soller Vark **CR 2**
Male elite human warrior 2
CN Medium human
Init +2; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14
hp 19 (2 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +0, **Will** –1

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk rapier +5 (1d6+1/18–20)
Ranged light crossbow +4 (1d8/19–20)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear 2 *elixirs of swimming*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 13
Feats Toughness, Weapon Finesse
Skills Intimidate +6, Swim +6
Possessions combat gear, masterwork studded leather, masterwork buckler, masterwork rapier, light crossbow with 10 bolts, earring worth 50 gp, silver ring worth 25 gp

Tactics: This can be a difficult first encounter to the Savage Tide campaign if the PCs aren't careful. The thugs aren't that dangerous individually, but there are probably more of them than PCs. The main advantages the PCs should have over the smugglers is an element of surprise and higher morale.

Boarding the *Blue Nixie* requires a DC 10 Climb check; there are plenty of ropes to aid the climber, but they and the ship's hull are slippery in places. It's ten feet to the main deck from the waterline.

The thugs call out an alarm at the start of their turn, then use their crossbows

Blue Nixie Key

B1. Main Deck: During the day, two thugs stand watch here.
B2. Quarterdeck: During the day, one thug stands watch here.
B3. Foc's'le Deck
B4. Sail Locker
B5. Chain Locker
B6. Wardroom
B7. Officer's Quarters: During the day, two of the thugs rest here.
B8. Captain's Quarters: Soller Vark rests here during the day with one of his thugs, a foul-mouthed woman named Ketrana.
B9. Galley: The ship's galley has a small stove and storage for all kinds of foodstuffs.
B10. Hold: Two dozen cages of sickly exotic animals here; the largest cage is the one containing the rhagodessa, a five-foot-square iron cage that sits in the portside corner near the bow. One thug stands guard here at all times.
B11. Crew Quarers
B12. Brig
B13. Bilge Access

Soller Vark

against the PCs. Each round of combat, the thugs sleeping inside make DC 5 Listen checks to hear the battle and wake. The two thugs in the officer's cabin (area **B7**) join a fight on deck in one round, while Vark and his lover take an additional round to reach the deck.

Any time a thug is wounded, he panics and tries to flee. If the PCs left a boat untended, the thug tries to escape in it—otherwise, they jump into the water and swim for shore. Any thug prevented from escaping begs pitifully for his life. Soller Vark is not above such cowardice—he fights until brought below 5 hit points, at which point he attempts to flee or surrender as well.

Once it becomes obvious to the thugs that the battle is going against them (or as soon as any PC attempts to enter the hold), Vark (or one of the thugs if Vark's not present) shrieks out a command to "Burn them! Burn them all!"

Monster on the Loose (EL 2)

When the command to burn the animals is given, a thug named Mera Veskat in the *Blue Nixie*'s hold begins lighting cages of animals on fire. Fortunately for the PCs, Mera's not that good at lighting fires, and the smoke riles the animals. The sound of shrieking monkeys and parrots wells up from the hold below, and a few moments later so does the sound of a terrific crash followed by a woman's high-pitched scream and a strange, shrill keening. Mera's actions have excited the rhagodessa to a point where the arachnid threw itself against the walls of its cage, causing the poorly latched door to fly open. The monster is upon Mera in a heartbeat, killing her with one powerful bite.

Creature: Once it's loose, the ravenous rhagodessa begins killing the other animals rapidly, going from cage to cage in a fit of hunger. If it sees anything larger (like a PC) enter the hold, it fixates on the new target and attacks at once.

Rhagodessa: hp 22; see Appendix.

The Nixie Reclaimed

If interrogated, the thugs know only that their boss, Vark, was going to pay them 20 gp apiece to help load crates of animals onto the *Blue Nixie* and then a few days later onto another ship in the middle of the night. Only Vark knows that the customer was a Scarlet Brotherhood ship, and he won't reveal that unless magically compelled. In any event, the Scarlet Brotherhood ship learns of the complication and doesn't show at the rendezvous if the PCs decide to try to pose as Vark and his crew later that night.

A search of the captain's quarters uncovers a large trunk, within which is a leather pouch of 100 pp—Lavinia's missing payment to the harbormaster. Lavinia's father's signet ring is hidden in the headboard of the captain's bunk, in a secret panel that can be discovered with a DC 20 Search check. A scrap of rolled-up parchement has been threaded through the ring. Written on it in Verik Vanderboren's handwriting is a strange list of monsters (see Handout #2). This list is actually the combination for the vault in area **V3**; the number of eyes possessed by each monster indicates the sequence of numbers (6-1-2-4-2) while the sunrise/sunset indicates right/left for the combination lock. See area **V3** for more details. If the PCs don't find this for her, Lavinia finds it after several hours of searching the ship.

Handout #2

Chimera looks to sunrise
Cyclops looks to sunset
Medusa looks to sunrise
Umber Hulk looks to sunset
Basilisk looks to sunrise

PART THREE: THE VANDERBOREN VAULT

Lavinia is overjoyed with the PCs if they manage to reclaim the *Blue Nixie*, and more so if they find her father's signet ring. At this point, she makes a job offer to the PCs—she's so pleased with their work so far that she's willing to hire them on as her personal troubleshooters, agents, and bodyguards. She offers the PCs 100 gp per month to remain in her employ, and implies that their service to one of Sasserine's noble families could have advantages and rewards beyond this monthly wage.

Assuming the PCs are interested, she already has a task for them. She needs to travel to Castle Teraknian in the Sasserine Harbor to check her family vault. All of Sasserine's nobility have vaults under the castle, but she's never seen any of them (including her own). Rumors hold that some family vaults are quite extensive and guarded by traps—based on things she overheard her father say through the years, she suspects that the Vanderboren Vault is relatively small and safe, but that there may be a construct guardian. She would like the PCs to accompany her to Castle Teraknian to provide protection and aid in investigating the vault contents.

Lavinia hires a coach to take her and the PCs from her manor to High Market in the Noble District, where the group takes a ferry over to Castle Teraknian. They spend little time in the castle itself, stopping only to speak to a clerk who verifies Lavinia's identity and her signet, and who then escorts them down a spiral staircase into a large circular chamber under the castle.

Over a dozen five-foot-wide hallways radiate out from the central vault chamber; each of these halls is ten feet long and ends at a single iron door—the entrance to the family vault. The clerk does not accompany the PCs and Lavinia into the vault; he instead bids them good day and returns to his office in the castle above.

V1. Entrance

The short passageway ends at a solid-looking iron door. The portal is emblazoned with a simple rune—an eight-pointed star. Above the door, inscribed in flowing script on a polished silver plaque, is the name "Vanderboren." A single handle protrudes from the door, just below a circular depression bearing the mark of the Vanderboren signet.

The iron door is *arcane locked* (caster level 15th) until a properly ensorcelled signet ring is inserted into the small depression above the handle by a Vanderboren. At this point, the door flashes once with blue light, then slowly swings open on creaking hinges. The door remains open until it is closed manually, at which point it locks automatically to the outside. A creature on the inside may push the door open again with ease, even without the signet ring or the proper bloodline.

Lavinia doesn't quite recognize the eight pointed star symbol, although she does admit it seems familiar. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) check is enough for a PC to place the symbol—the same star symbol appears on the sign of a building on the western edge of the Merchant's District. This building is the Seeker's Lodge, the regional base of a world-spanning group of adventurers and treasure hunters known as the Seekers. Lavinia's family has long been members of this organization, although tradition held that induction of children into the guild didn't occur until their 23rd birthday. Lavinia turns 23 in a few months—her parents died before they revealed their allegiance to the Seekers

V2. Iron Guardian (EL 2)

The floor of this domed chamber is of polished green marble. Two fifteen-foot-wide alcoves have lower ceilings and feature marble pillars carved to resemble coiling snakes. In the center of the room, five similar pillars are embedded into the walls, rising up thirty feet to a dome overhead. Looking up, the dome bears a huge representation of the same eight-pointed star that was engraved on the door to the south.

This room serves as an atrium and guardroom for the vault proper, one final defense to ward off would-be thieves. Although there doesn't seem to be an actual exit from the room, a DC 20 Search check of the northernmost pillar recessed into the chamber's walls reveals that the snake patterns on this pillar are different than those of the other pillars. A DC 15 Search of this pillar head reveals a hidden switch that, when triggered, causes the snake designs to animate. They writhe aside like living creatures, forming a coiling archway that allows access into area **V3**.

Creature: A single guardian watches over this chamber, a serpentine construct of metal called an iron cobra. The snake is three feet long and weighs about 100 pounds, looking like a cobra made of dozens of circular iron bands fitted together to form a snakelike body. The iron cobra is a master of stealth, and hides in the eastern alcove behind the pillar. Although mindless, iron cobras are capable of following complex orders from their masters. This one has been commanded to attack anyone who enters and does not bear the Vanderboren signet. Although Lavinia wears this ring, she lets the PCs go first into the vault—as a result, the cobra quickly and quietly slithers out from its hiding place to attack the first PC to enter the room.

IRON COBRA **CR 2**

N Medium construct
Fiend Folio 103
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14
hp 31 hp (2 HD); **DR** 5/adamantine
Immune construct traits
SR 19

Fort +0, **Ref** +3, **Will** +0

Spd 30 ft.
Melee bite +2 (1d6+1 plus poison)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +2

Abilities Str 12, Dex 17, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1
SQ stalk victim, stealth
Skills Hide +13, Move Silently +13

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fort DC 14, 1d4/1d4 Strength. An iron cobra's poison reservoir holds three doses of poison; refilling the reservoir takes 1 minute.
Stalk Victim (Su) An iron cobra can be commanded by its creator to stalk down and attack any creature whose name is known to the creator. The iron cobra can detect this creature's location, as if by the *locate creature* spell at caster level 12th.
Stealth (Ex) An iron cobra gains a +10 enhancement bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks.

Tactics: If a fight with the iron cobra goes on for more than four rounds, give players a DC 15 Spot check each round to notice that the cobra seems to be taking pains to avoid Lavinia, if she's present. Although she won't think of it herself, if she boldly presents her signet ring to the construct, it immediately becomes docile and ceases attacking, returning to its post to wait for the next group of "intruders."

V3. Vault

This octagonal room is supported by a single large pillar with dozens of deep grooves along its sides. The seven walls of this room each bear fantastically detailed bas-relief carvings of exotic monsters in threatening poses. Starting at the wall immediately to the west of the entrance to the room and moving clockwise, the carvings depict a tentacled monster with a glaring red eye and a mouth full of teeth, a looming dragon, a fish-like creature with three eyes and four tentacles, a two-headed giant wielding a

pair of immense clubs, a spherical creature with four eyestalks and a bulging central eye over a drooling maw, a gorilla-like beast with a fanged maw and six eyes, and finally a towering black spider with seven eyes. Each monster's eyes consist of a glittering red stone. The ceiling above is only ten feet high, with the now-familiar eight-pointed star pattern radiating out from the grooved pillar. The arms of this star are black, save for the one pointing south toward the entrance, which is red.

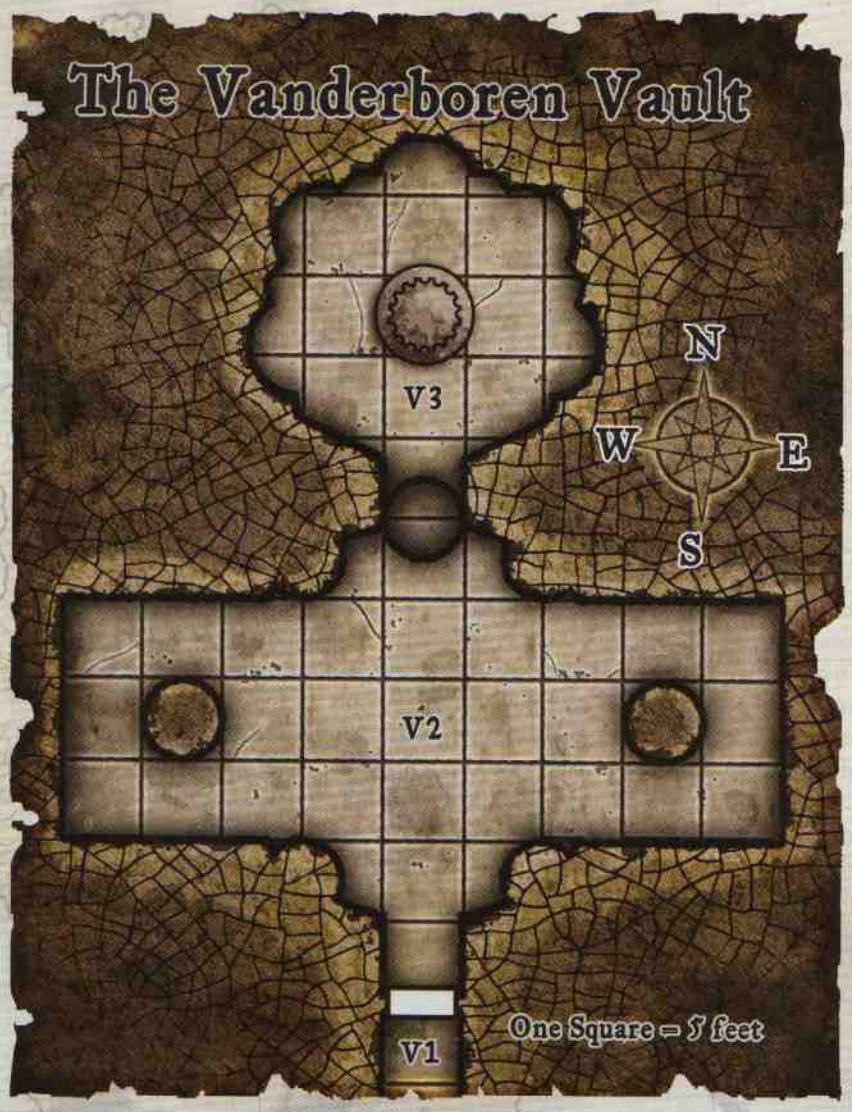
The creatures depicted (in the order described above) are a roper, a red dragon, an aboleth, an ettin, a spectator beholderkin, a gray render, and a monstrous spider.

This entire room is in fact a clever combination lock designed to hide and protect the five hidden alcoves in the walls of the chamber. The grooved pillar in the room's center is an immense stone tumbler that can be rotated in both directions, as a DC 20 Search can reveal.

The pillar doesn't rotate smoothly. Rather, it "clicks" in its socket as it rotates, eight times in the course of a single revolution. As the pillar rotates, the eight-pointed star in the ceiling rotates as well, the red arm pointing to a new wall with each click. The trick to this combination lock is the number of eyes each creature on the wall possesses. Starting from the wall immediately to the west of the entrance, the eyes number 1–7.

Although the PCs may not realize it, the scrap of paper they found with the Vanderboren signet ring actually contains the combination to this lock—Verik Vanderboren wrote it down in code for his daughter, hoping she'd be able to figure it out if something were to happen to him before her 23rd birthday. Unfortunately, his code is too clever for her. As such, it falls to the PCs to decipher the mysterious list in Handout #2.

The correct combination for this immense safe is 6 right, 1 left, 2 right, 4 left, 2 right. Although the parchment lists different creatures, the code is the same: the number of eyes each creature has corresponds to the number of the combination, while the notation of "sunrise" or "sunset" indicates east and west (right and left).



While no amount of brute force the PCs possess at this level can open the vault, a series of five DC 30 Open Lock checks can crack the safe—this is how Vanthus got into the vault (although he had to take 20 on the checks and used up several potions of *cat's grace* in the process).

Once the combination is entered, the entire room rumbles as the five alcoves rotate in place, revealing several coffers and chests.

Treasure: The red stone eyes sparkle nicely, yet are relatively worthless agates, each worth 2 gp.

Most of the 20 chests in the vault are empty—at best, only 1d4 silver coins remain scattered along the bottom of each chest. As more and more chests turn up empty, Lavinia grows increasingly distraught. Finally, in the last alcove, there's a reprieve—several of the chests here remain untouched. In all, there's 2,900 gp in coins and gems left in these chests, along with a large number of ledgers and a small iron coffer containing a thick pile of documents.

Most of the ledgers list debts owed to the Vanderborens from guilds and noble families in Sasserine—it seems that Lavinia's parents made a practice of doing dangerous favors for numerous organizations in Sasserine, yet rarely bothered to collect rewards. Instead, they allowed their patrons to keep the rewards with the understanding that they could collect at any time.

The documents in the iron coffer are another story. These documents are written in her mother's handwriting but in a strange language Lavinia doesn't

recognize (Sylvan), although she recognizes the letters as being elven. Included in the document are several maps of jungles, coastlines, and other regions that seem to represent some unknown tropical location. The document also includes dozens of sketches of strange, exotic creatures. This document was Larissa Vanderboren's journal cataloging her explorations of the Isle of Dread. Over the course of the next two adventures, this journal leads Lavinia to discover the existence of Farshore, a distant colony her parents helped to establish on this remote isle, but for now it serves as little more than a curiosity.

Between the gold and the IOUs, Lavinia now has more than enough to pay the back taxes and to begin setting her estate back in order. Nevertheless, the missing money concerns her greatly. It'll be a rough year, especially if her aunt and uncle in Cauldron can't help her out in the months to come, but at least she now has enough to carry on. She'll pay each of the PCs 200 gp as a reward for their aid, and asks them to come visit her as soon as possible regarding an even more important job when they get the time.

Development: The missing gold was stolen from the vault by Vanthus Vanderboren to aid in financing the Lotus Dragons. If the PCs don't think of it as they leave Castle Teraknian, Lavinia asks the clerk if anyone else has visited the vault recently. He replies with an affirmative, saying that her brother Vanthus visited the vault several times over the past month. The clerk is shocked if he learns that Vanthus has been missing for a month and that Lavinia didn't know he'd been visiting the vault—Vanthus had a signet ring (stolen well over a month ago from his mother) and the clerk recognized him as a Vanderboren. The clerk agrees to inform Lavinia if Vanthus tries to enter the vault again, but Vanthus has no plans to return to the Vault once his sister gains access to its contents—he's already stolen more than enough as it is.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: If the PCs figure out the combination to the vault on their own without NPC help (or if they open it with Open Lock checks), award them XP as if they'd defeated a CR 2 creature.

PART FOUR: PERIL UNDER PARROT ISLAND

Once the Vault is secured and Lavinia's immediate financial problems are taken care of, Vanthus becomes her primary concern. Lavinia explains to the PCs that the two of them were quite close growing up, since their parents were rarely around. They grew to depend on each other, and got into a fair amount of trouble together. After one particularly complex prank involving several *elixirs of love* being emptied into the nearby water tower, their childhoods came to an end. Lavinia was sent to the Thenalar Academy to live out the next five years of her life, and Vanthus was shipped out to work on a plantation. When they returned to live in the family manor a year ago, they had both changed. Lavinia likes to think she benefited from her time at Thenalar. Vanthus, on the other hand, spent his time away nurturing his bitterness. He no longer had time for Lavinia, slept all day, and spent the nights with what Lavinia recalls as "associates of doubtful character." Eventually, he moved out of the house entirely—Lavinia believes he took up with a lover in Azure District, but she never learned the details.

When their parents died, Vanthus returned for a week to live at the manor, but he had changed even more. Gone was the easy sense of humor she recalled fondly from their childhood, and in its place was a bitter cynicism and a morbid streak that sent chills up Lavinia's spine. After several arguments, Vanthus struck her with his fist. Lavinia was shocked, and for a moment she thinks Vanthus was shocked as well, but an instant later he was back to his new self, all scowls and menace. He gathered his belongings and left—Lavinia hasn't seen him since.

She knows something profound happened to her brother at some point to change him, but she's not sure what this was. She believes he's fallen in with a bad crowd, perhaps smugglers, or thieves or even killers. Although his attitude might speak otherwise, she hopes that it's not too late, that if he can be brought back to her side she might be able to talk some sense into him and redeem him before he passes forever out of her reach. The problem is, she doesn't know where he's gone.

Tracking Vanthus

Lavinia has few clues as to where Vanthus has gone. She recommends asking around about him throughout the city; she doubts he's hiding out in Champion's or Noble District, but even these locations may hold clues. Her suspicion that he's been living with a woman in Azure District arose from half-heard rumors, but it remains the strongest lead she has.

The results of a DC 20 Gather Information check about Vanthus and his current location varies from district to district, as detailed below.

Azure District: A few people remember seeing Vanthus at taverns here, often in the company of a woman named Brissa Santos, a notorious pickpocket turned semi-legitimate artist who's had her fair share of brushes with the law. Like Vanthus, no one's seen Brissa lately. For this adventure, Brissa's a red herring; she's got a more important role to play in the next adventure. Attempts to track Brissa down now should universally fail, but quickly attract Shefton Rosk's attention (see The Informant).

Merchant's District: People remember seeing Vanthus here and there, although no one's seen him recently. Everyone assumes he's still living at Vanderboren Manor if asked.

Champion's District, Cudgel District, Noble District: Nothing.

Shadowshore: Inquiries made in Shadowshore actually bear the hints of fruit. A successful check made here not only indicates that Vanthus was seen in the area, but that he was often seen in the company of a known smuggler named Penkus. Inquiries about Penkus reveal that he's a semi-notorious figure in Shadowshore known for his drunken binges and violent temper. Over the last year, Penkus has been less visible in Shadowshore, leading many to believe

he'd moved on to another venue. As recently as a few weeks ago, though, Penkus and Vanthus were spotted at a boat shop called "It Still Floats!" where they got in a huge argument with the proprietor, a pessimistic dwarf named Panchi. If the PCs speak to Panchi and manage to adjust his attitude from indifferent to friendly, he'll admit he sold a boat to them. He goes on to say that they seemed excited, and loaded a lot of lamp oil, lanterns, and rope into the boat before they left. He's not sure where they went, but they headed west.

Sunrise: Although Vanthus is currently living secretly in Sunrise District, he's careful not to be seen there. Gather Information checks made here reveal nothing.

Although the PCs may find little in the way of useful information by making these checks, they do have an unintended result. Agents and allies of the Lotus Dragons quickly note that someone's asking about Vanthus, and it doesn't take him long to piece together who they are (especially if he's already figured out who was behind the recent events on board the *Blue Nixie*). Rather than risk having the PCs find him and the Lotus Dragon hideout, Vanthus decides to lure them to the same place he got rid of his competition in the guild—the smuggler's tunnels under Parrot Island.

The Informant

As word of the rising power of the Lotus Dragons spreads through Sasserine's underworld, the number of desperate would-be criminals seeking to join the guild rises as well. One such misguided soul is **Shefton Rosk** (CN male half-elf expert 1; hp 4; Bluff +8), a man who hopes to join the Lotus Dragons so he can get rich. Unfortunately for Shefton, his sponsor Vanthus sees him as nothing more than a tool to be used to get rid of the PCs.

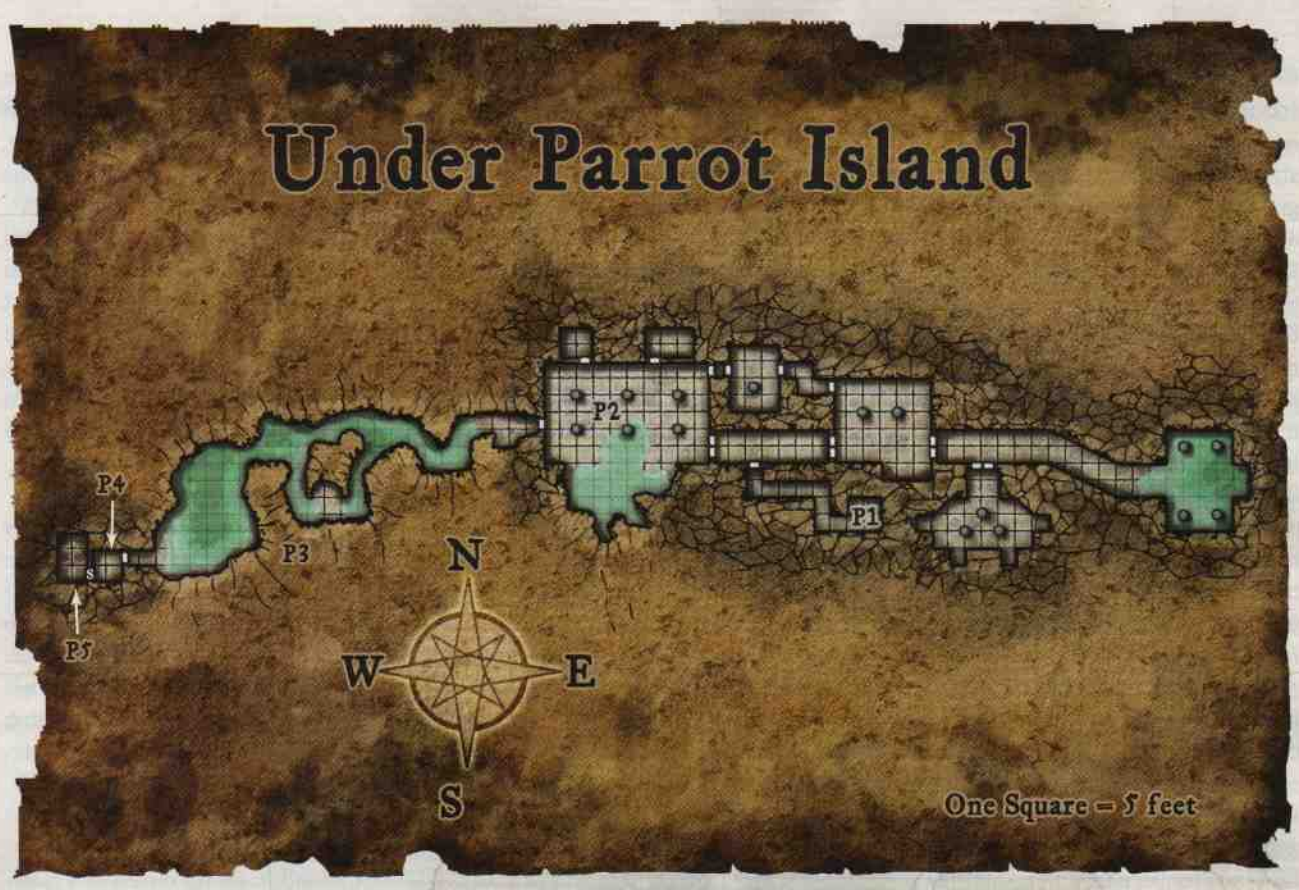
After the PCs have spent a day or two fruitlessly searching for Vanthus, a nervous-looking half-elf with messy black hair, a ragged suit of leather armor, and dirty hands approaches them. Glancing about, the man introduces himself in a quiet voice to the PCs as Shefton, and asks them if they're looking for Vanthus. If they are, and if they pay him 5 gp, Shefton claims to know where Vanthus is hiding out.

Shefton's been told by Vanthus to lead the PCs to Parrot Island, and to inform them that he's been living for the past few days in an abandoned complex of smuggler's tunnels below the isle. For an additional 5 gold, Shefton agrees to lead the PCs to the hidden trap door on the isle that Vanthus has been using to enter and exit the complex below.

Shefton's not the greatest liar, but his skill at Bluff may be enough to fool the PCs anyway. If they start asking difficult questions (such as, "How do you know so much about Vanthus anyway?"), Shefton claims that Vanthus approached him a few weeks ago to help set up a smuggling operation in the old tunnels below Parrot Island.

Parrot Island

Parrot Island has long served as a hideout for smugglers. The tunnels in the



bedrock below this narrow isle have existed nearly as long as Sasserine itself, but are now abandoned. Aboveground, the island is little more than a rocky outcropping surrounded by 30-foot-high cliffs save from the eastern end, where a narrow beach affords an easier approach. The isle is thickly vegetated, the trees above serving as the roost for hundreds of noisy, brightly colored parrots. A DC 12 Survival check is enough to note a partially overgrown trail leading up from the beach to a small clearing at the center of the island. It is up this trail and to this clearing that Shefton leads the PCs.

Hidden at the southern end of the clearing is a stone trap door. A DC 15 Search check is enough to locate the door—if Shefton is with the PCs, he can point it out to them easily. Once it's open, a five-foot-wide shaft leading down into the darkness below is revealed. A rope hangs from a hook in the wall, providing a relatively safe method of descent (DC 5 Climb). The shaft itself is just over 30 feet deep, and opens into an empty room below (area **P1**).

Vanthus waits hidden in the undergrowth nearby, and once the last PC descends into the tunnels, he emerges. Give the PCs a DC 0 Listen check (modified by 3 to account for the distance) to hear Shefton's exclamation of surprise as Vanthus approaches and stabs him in the back. A few moments later, Vanthus pushes Shefton's bleeding body into the shaft—the half-elf takes enough damage to die upon impact. Vanthus's next act is to cut loose the rope; it comes slithering down the shaft one round after Shefton's fall. Vanthus may take a few rounds to taunt any PCs he sees looking back up at him, shouting things like, "Say hi to Penkus's ghost for me while you're down there!" or "Serves you right for messing around with my sister, you thugs!" He answers any questions or threats the PCs send up at him with mocking laughter—when he grows bored (or as soon as anyone tries to attack him or climb up the shaft) he drops the trap door back in place and rolls several large boulders over on top of it, the grinding sound of which is dreadfully obvious to those trapped below.

Staging this event can be tricky, especially if the PCs insist on leaving one or more of their number topside while the others explore below. Vanthus doesn't spring his trap until he's sure he can catch all the PCs below. The adventure doesn't hinge on the plot twist of trapping the PCs in the smuggler's tunnels, and if they're clever enough to never present an opening for Vanthus, you should reward the PCs by not pulling strings to arrange their entrapment. As long as they find Penkus's body in area **P4**, things should still be on track for Part Five.

Trapped!

Once the PCs are trapped in the tunnels, they essentially have two methods of escape. They can swim to safety through the underwater tunnel from area **P3** to the harbor, or they can use the *elemental gem* from the treasury (area **P5**) to call an earth elemental to travel up to the entrance to clear the boulders and open the trap door. A canny party might engineer other methods of escaping—these two options simply represent the most likely means of escape.

For the majority of this part, the PCs must make do with what limited resources they brought with them to survive. The eastern tunnels consist of several rooms once used as barracks, storage, and meeting areas by the smugglers. Desperate characters who scavenge these rooms may find a few supplies like a barrel of drinkable (but nasty-tasting) water, a few torches, flint and steel, some rope, and the like—feel free to give them one or two pieces of old, worn-out gear for each room they search. There is no illumination in the brick-lined tunnels. Doors in the complex are of soggy wood, and most are swollen shut. All double doors hang ajar.

As the PCs explore the tunnels, they should quickly realize they've been abandoned for some time. Yet the tunnels are far from safe.

Simple Wooden Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Open DC 13, Break DC 13.

The Hungry Dead (EL 1–3)

Centuries ago, these tunnels were used by a band of pirates as a base for their smuggling operation. When their enemies discovered the lair, a fantastic battle that resulted in the collapse of the sea entrance to the tunnels sealed the pirates in. A few tried to escape via the shaft in area **P1** only to find that their enemies had buried the entrance, making this route impassable. Things went from bad to worse when, in a few days, depleted food and encroaching madness drove one of the smugglers (a cleric of Olidammara named Veldimar Krund) to cannibalism. Veldimar organized a group of nine smugglers and murdered the others, and when they ran out of food again, the insane smugglers turned on themselves. Soon, only Veldimar remained, and when he perished in a gruesome attempt to amputate his foot for a meal, Olidammara cursed him, causing him to live on himself after his ignoble death in the form of an undead monster called a huecuva. The other cannibals rose from death as well, becoming ravenous zombies that now view the huecuva as their leader.

For nearly 200 years, these hungry undead wandered the tunnels aimlessly, until several Lotus Dragons (includnig Vanthus and Penkus) explored the tunnels, hoping to find a place to set up a new smuggling operation. Before long, they were attacked by the hungry dead. Vanthus saw an opportunity for advancement in the Lotus Dragons and took it. He abandoned Penkus and the others, and while the dead fed upon his allies, he escaped. His report to the Lotus Dragons conveniently omitted his actions, and the guild decided to look elsewhere for a place to stage smuggling operations (such as the *Blue Nixie*).

Penkus made it all the way to area **P4**, where he succumbed to a terrible disease inflicted upon him by the undead cleric. Before he died, he scribbled a damning testimony of Vanthus—a parchment that conveniently reveals where the missing brother has been spending his time of late.

Nine ravenous zombies and one huecuva prowl the tunnels in groups of up to three. The zombies are mindless, driven only by their hunger. Proto-memories of life prevent them from entering water (they're too stupid to realize they can't drown), making areas of water relatively safe. Use encounters with the undead to liven up

explorations of the smuggler's tunnels, throwing groups of 1–3 at the PCs at any moment where the suspense would benefit (such as just after they open a door, find a bit of treasure, or turn a corner in a hall). Once the first group is encountered and defeated, the remaining zombies mobilize—their dreadful moans and the sound of their gnashing teeth echo throughout the tunnels, making it difficult to estimate how many remain, or even from what direction they are approaching. When they attack, the fanged maws of these horrific zombies open wider than they should, revealing row upon row of jagged teeth. Veldimar himself should be the last undead encountered.

RAVENOUS ZOMBIE PIRATE (9) **CR 1**
NE Medium undead
Monster Manual 266, *Dragon Compendium* 212
Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0
AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13
hp 16 (2 HD); **DR** 5/slashing
Immune undead traits
Fort +0, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3
Weakness need to feed, partial actions only
Spd 30 ft.
Melee bite +4 (1d6+3)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +4
Atk Options feed, improved grab (bite)
Abilities Str 16, Dex 10, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1
Feats Toughness
Possessions rotten studded leather (treat as padded armor)
Feed (Ex) A ravenous zombie pirate deals automatic bite damage with a successful grapple check.
Need to Feed (Ex) Whenever a ravenous zombie pirate slays a living opponent, it must make a DC 15 Will save or stop to eat its kill. When eating, the zombie can do nothing else—it loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and cannot make attacks of opportunity.

VELDIMAR KRUND **CR 3**
Male human huecuva cleric 1
NE Medium undead
Fiend Folio 94
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common
AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17
hp 15 (1 HD); **DR** 10/silver
Immune undead traits
Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +5
Spd 30 ft.
Melee slam +0 (1d6 plus huecuva blight)
Base Atk +0; **Grp** +0
Special Actions death touch 1/day (1d6), rebuke undead 5/day (1d20+2, 2d6+3)
Spells Prepared (CL 1st)
1st—*cause fear*^{D} (DC 14), *divine favor*, *shield of faith*
0—*guidance* (3)
D domain spell; **Domains** Death, Evil
Abilities Str 10, Dex 13, Con —, Int 4, Wis 17, Cha 15
SQ divine conversion, spontaneous casting (inflict), turn resistance +2
Feats Combat Casting, Stealthy, Toughness
Skills Bluff +6, Diplomacy +8, Hide +6, Move Silently +2, Swim –2
Possessions rusted chainmail (treat as studded leather), gold holy symbol of Olidammara worth 50 gp
Divine Conversion Veldimar no longer worships Olidammara. Instead, he gains his divine power through his newfound faith in Death and Evil.
Huecuva Blight (Su) Disease—slam, Fortitude DC 12, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d2 Strength and 1d2 Constitution. The save DC is Charisma-based.

P1. Entrance

This ten-foot-square room seems empty. A shaft leads up through the ceiling in the northeast corner, and a brick-lined tunnel with a curved roof leads to the west.

Although the walls are made of brick, they're also slippery and slimy with moisture—climbing them requires a DC 20 Climb check. If Vanthus has closed the trap door above, its iron-plated underside should be quite difficult to batter through. If the trap door is smashed open, the boulders Vanthus stacked on top come tumbling down, striking anyone in the shaft for 2d6 damage.

Iron-Plated Stone Trap Door: 4 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Open/Break DC 32.

P2. Smuggling Chamber (EL 3)

Four great wooden pillars rise up to support the ceiling, which sags dangerously in places and is thick with hanging strands of fungus. Several doors line the walls—one to the west (from which comes a muffled sloshing sound), two to the north (the western of which is badly damaged and hangs askew on its one remaining hinge), and two to the east. To the south, the ceiling has collapsed, leaving the southern part of the room choked in debris. A rippling pool of water reaches halfway into the room from this wall of stone and rubble. It seems that a wooden pier once extended into this pool, but all that remains now are several rotting wooden pilings protruding from the water. A man's body floats face down among them.

To the south, the sloshing pool of water may taunt PCs with promises of an underwater escape route. The pool is connected to the harbor, but unfortunately, the submerged tunnels are rarely wider than a foot (and in most cases much narrower). A Tiny or smaller creature could navigate one of the 50-foot-long tunnels to escape, but a Small creature must make a DC 30 Escape Artist check to move through the tunnels each round.

Creatures: Further complicating the pool as an escape route are the five foul-tempered dark brown kelp crabs that live within. Each of these crabs measures nearly two feet in diameter, with pincers the size of daggers. Fiercely territorial, they surge out of the pool to attack anything that approaches within five feet of the shore. The ravenous dead have learned to avoid this pool, but their hunger periodically draws them near enough to try to catch one of the crabs to eat.

SMALL MONSTROUS CRABS (5) **CR 1/2**
N Small vermin (aquatic)
Stormwrack 141
Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +0, Spot +4
AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14
hp 8 (1 HD)
Immune vermin traits
Fort +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0
Spd 20 ft.
Melee 2 claws +1 (1d4)
Base Atk +0; **Grp** +0 (includes +4 racial bonus)
Atk Options constrict 2d4, improved grab (claw)
Abilities Str 10, Dex 11, Con 12, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 2

SQ amphibious
Feats Toughness
Skills Hide +8, Spot +4

Treasure: The body in the pool belonged to one of Penkus's allies, a Lotus thief who wasn't quite fast enough to escape to safety before he was taken down by the ravenous dead. The crab-eaten, soggy body has nothing of value on it, but a DC 15 Search of the pool reveals his masterwork silver dagger, a weapon that may come in handy in a fight against Veldimar Krund

P3. The Sea Caves

The sloshing sound comes from the churning waters of a sea cave. Fueled by what must be powerful submerged currents, the water laps and splashes against the walls of the twisting natural cavern that leads to the west. A sandy slope descends from the door down to the edge of the subterranean tide. Dozens of purple and red sea urchins glisten in shallow divots along the ground and lower walls here, their spines glittering with water.

During high tide, the shallow water is about a foot deep and the deep water ten feet deep, with the transition between the two zones being a sudden drop off. At low tide (generally for three hours at sunrise and again at sunset), the "shallow" water zone is slippery but dry, and the deep section drops to eight feet deep. It costs two squares of movement to move through shallow water when it's not low tide—further, any creature that begins its turn in a square of shallow water here must make a DC 16 Strength or Balance check or fall prone from the surging current. At low tide, the slippery surface requires only a DC 10 Balance check to navigate. Swimming in the deeper water requires a DC 15 Swim check.

A character that slips and falls in the shallow water must make a DC 14 Reflex save to avoid landing on a patch of sea urchins. Failure indicates the character takes 1d3 points of damage from the spines and must make a DC 11 Fortitude save to avoid becoming nauseated from the urchins' poison for one minute, after which he must repeat the save to avoid taking 1 point of Strength damage.

A large pool of water sloshes in the western portion of the caves—this pool is twelve feet deep at its deepest point during high tide. A five-foot-wide tunnel leads north at the base of this pool; this submerged tunnel travels on a twisting course to the northwest for 70 feet before emerging from the sea bed in the harbor between Parrot Island and the gate that separates Shadowshore from Cudgel district; from here, it's only a 20 foot swim to the surface and then a 50 foot swim to shore. The currents in the tunnel are strong but not overwhelming; it's a DC 15 Swim check to navigate the tunnel. The tunnel entrance is difficult to see even underwater, requiring a DC 15 Search check to locate. From above the water surface, this increases to a DC 28 Search check.

P4. Penkus' Doom

The door to this chamber is barred from within; it can't be opened with Open Lock but can be bashed down as normal.

The smell in this chamber is horrific, a cloying stink of rotten meat rising from the bloated, seeping body slumped in the middle of the floor. The corpse's dark, almost black flesh bulges against its armor, ready to burst at the slightest touch. An intricate tattoo of a dragon clutching a flower is barely visible on his shoulder against the diseased flesh, and clutched in one hand is a crumpled scroll.

This body was once Penkus. When Vanthus locked him and his companions in these tunnels, Penkus made it all the way to the sea caves before one of the undead, the fallen cleric Veldimar, caught up to him. Penkus took two solid blows from the huecuva's claws before he made it through the pool in area **P11**. Yet even after he locked himself in this ancient guardroom, he didn't actually escape the undead menace, for he had contracted huecuva blight. As the days wore on and Penkus subsisted on fish and his dwindling water supplies, he grew more and more sickly. When he realized he was going to die, he lit his last torch and hastily scribbled a note condemning his "friend," hopefully providing anyone who found his body all the information they need to avenge his death. This note is reproduced as Handout #3.

Treasure: Penkus' suit of masterwork studded leather armor is still serviceable, although it needs to be cleaned before it is used. He used

Handout #3

These bones once be Penkus, so if ye read this, I be dead, laid low by the sickput on me by that foul dead thing! Yet even as me flesh wracks, know t'was not the dead what brought my doom, but one I 'til recently called friend!

Vanthus Vanderboren! Your name fills me with bile! Spineless, treacherous cur! You left us here to die. You left ME here to die, after all what I done t'get ye into th'Lotus! Yer designs on the Lady of the Lotus be clear now, and with meself out th'way... ye doubtless move even now into power, slithering amid my vacancy like a hermit crab in a shell, or a cadaver worm to still-warm flesh. CURSE UPON YE!

To th'one what reads this. If ye have any honor or vengeance in yer soul, know that Vanthus must die. He dwells in the lap o' th'Lotus, below th'Taxidermist's Hall. Seek him there, but 'fore he dies he must ken it were Penkus what undid him and guides yer killing blow.

And if, by some cruel spite of fate, it be ye what read this, Vanthus, know with certainty I wait for ye in Hell, where I intend t'rival the pit itself in yer torment!

most of his other gear up in his frantic attempt to escape the undead, but a gold ring on a bloated finger is worth 120 gp, and a masterwork dagger is hidden in a boot.

P5. Treasure Vault

The air in this chamber is stale, yet unlike the other chambers in the complex the place seems quite dry—even dusty. Cobwebs hang in thick sheets from the ceiling, and against the northern wall sit three large sea chests.

These three chests still contain the bulk of the smugglers' treasure, forgotten in this room for well over a century. All three chests are locked and the keys are long-lost; a DC 25 Open Lock chest gets them open. Alternately, they can be bashed open with weapons, although this automatically destroys all of the potions within.

Sea Chest: Hardness 5; hp 30; Break DC 25.

Treasure: The first chest is filled with copper and silver coins; 7,500 cp and 1,500 sp in all.

The second chest contains a dozen bags, 10 of which contain 100 gp. The remaining two each contain a small handful of assorted gems; each pouch contains 250 gp worth of gems in all.

The third chest contains three *potions of cure light wounds*, a *potion of lesser restoration*, a *potion of invisibility*, a *potion of barkskin +3*, a *potion of cure serious wounds*, an *elixir of swimming*, a *wand of mage armor* with 11 charges, and a small jade coffer worth 300 gp. Inside of this coffer, resting on a tiny velvet cushion, is a light brown gemstone. This is an *earth elemental gem*, identified as such by a strip of paper tucked under the cushion.

PART FIVE: THE LOTUS AND THE DRAGON

After the PCs escape from Parrot Island, it shouldn't be long before they overhear the latest news that's torn through Sasserine—namely, that old Keltar Islaran, the harbormaster of Sasserine, has been murdered! Details of how the deed was done vary wildly—the only thing the rumor mill seems to agree on is that he was killed in his bed late last night and that the body was left in an especially gruesome state of evisceration.

Depending on how long the PCs have been gone, Lavinia greets them with varying stages of relief. If the PCs are diseased and can't afford a cure, she gladly pays for *potions of remove disease* and *potions of lesser restoration* to fix them up. She reacts with shock and despair if the PCs show her Penkus' note or tell her that Vanthus was the one who sealed them into the caves, yet quickly steels her emotions. She's not willing to admit to herself that Vanthus is beyond redemption, and asks the PCs to capture him alive. If he makes this impossible, though... she only asks that his death be merciful and quick.

Finding the Lotus Dragons

Since Sasserine threw off the Sea Prince rule, countless thieves' guilds have formed and fallen in a hidden underground war. The city watch knows, and for the most part they let these guilds fight it out with each other, figuring they suppress themselves far better than the law ever could. Yet in this environment, a clear victor has silently emerged—the Lotus Dragons. Funded in secret by one of Sasserine's noble families and lead by that family's daughter, Rowyn Kellani, the Lotus Dragons are on the verge of publicly displaying their power and seizing control of Sasserine's shipping concerns, effectively establishing themselves as the controllers of the city's sea trade. The assassination of Keltar Islaran is merely the latest step in this nefarious plan. Left to their ambitions, the Lotus Assassins will become one of the most powerful organizations in Sasserine in less than a month.

Although they haven't yet publicly declared their power, word of the Lotus Dragons has already spread through Sasserine. A Gather Information check reveals the information listed below.

DC 15: "The Lotus Dragons are a new guild of thieves—they seem to be a lot more organized than the other fly-by-night guilds that have been popping up over the past few years."

DC 20: "I hear that they've got more than people working for them; they've got ties to animal smugglers, and keep the worst of the lot in their guildhall as guardians."

DC 25: "The Lotus Dragons have some sort of connection to at least one noble family. Why else hasn't the city watch done anything about them?"

Lotus Dragon Ambush (EL 2)

The first time the PCs come to the Lotus Dragons' attention (either as the result of a Gather Information check or a visit to the Taxidermist's Guildhall), a single Lotus Dragon thief approaches one of the PCs on a busy street and uses Sleight of Hand to slip one of them a note, (Handout #4). If a PC spots the thief planting the note, he tries to flee to Dead Dog Plaza.

If the PCs ignore the note, the Lotus Dragons arrange an ambush to take place at some point when the PCs are on the streets of Sasserine. They pay a street urchin to try to pick one of the PCs' pockets and then race into the alley, at which point two thieves take prepared actions to fire hand crossbows at the lead PCs while the third throws a tanglefoot bag at the alley entrance to block retreat. From their vantage points atop the roofs 10 feet above, the thieves have cover (+4 to AC, +2 to Reflex saves). It's a DC 15 Climb check to clamber up the building walls (during which time climbing PCs are flat-footed and susceptible to sneak attacks), and there are no convenient windows or doors into the buildings. As soon as one thief is slain or the PCs seem to be about to reach the rooftops, the remaining thieves flee across the roofs, taking a winding route that eventually leads to Dead Dog Plaza.

If the PCs track the thieves to Dead Dog Plaza, the thieves leap into a well in the plaza center, dropping down into area **D9** below and hoping the PCs pursue. If the PCs do, they enter a chamber known to the thieves as the Crucible; see area **D9** for the peril that awaits the PCs therein.

Lotus Dragon Thieves (3) **CR 1**

Human rogue 1

NE Medium humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** Listen +0, Spot +0

Languages Common

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12

hp 8 (1 HD)

BY JAMES JACOBS

The Lotus Dragons

The Lotus Dragon thieves' guild is led by Rowyn Kellani, a beautiful, dangerous, and ambitious noblewoman who hopes to seize control of Sasserine's harbor and sea trade through acts of terror and mayhem. Her guild is heavily funded by her family and, more recently, through funds stolen by Vanthus from the Vanderboren vault.

All Lotus Dragon members bear a tattoo on the shoulder of a dragon wrapped around a lotus flower. Their guildhall is an extensive underground complex in Sunrise district at the junction of Crown Street, Monkey Street, and Water Street, under a plaza known as Dead Dog Alley.

During this adventure, the PCs may make multiple forays into the Lotus Dragon guildhall. In order to break the guild's back and prevent them from seeing their plans through, the PCs must slay or capture Rowyn and at least two thirds of the guild's other thieves. Keep track of their progress during the various ambushes and assaults, as the Lotus Dragons have a limited number of thieves to draw upon for ambushes and defense of the guildhall. In all, there are 22 Lotus Dragon thieves, not counting Rowyn, Vanthus, and the guild's master of torture, Kersh Reftun.

Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** +0

Spd 30 ft.

Melee rapier +1 (1d6+1/18–20) or sap +1 (1d6+1 nonlethal)

Ranged hand crossbow +2 (1d4/19–20)

Base Atk +0; **Grp** +1

Atk Options sneak attack +1d6

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds*, 2 doses of urchin venom

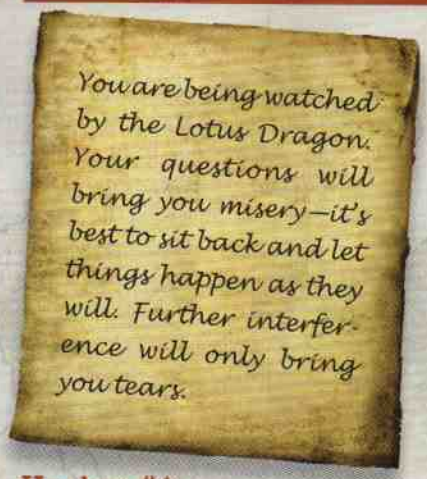
Abilities Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8

SQ trapfinding

Feats Improved Initiative , Stealthy

Skills Climb +5, Disable Device +5, Disguise +3, Hide +8, Intimidate +3, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +6, Search +5, Sleight of Hand +6, Swim +5

Possessions combat gear, leather armor, rapier, sap, hand crossbow with 10 bolts, thieves' tools, 10 gp


You are being watched by the Lotus Dragon. Your questions will bring you misery—it's best to sit back and let things happen as they will. Further interference will only bring you tears.

Handout #4

Development: Any captured Lotus Dragon has an initial attitude of hostile; he won't reveal the location of his guildhall or any other information unless his attitude can be made helpful. In this case, any captured thief can give the PCs a fairly accurate map of the guildhall that shows areas **D1—D17** and **D20—D25**; none of them know about areas **D18—D19** or **D26—D33**. They can reveal that their leader is a human woman, and that they know her only as Lady Lotus or the Dragon Mistress (depending on her mood). They can also reveal that her sub-commanders are named Vanthus Vanderboren and Kersh Reftun, and know that Nemien the Taxidermist is a guild ally.

The Taxidermist's Guildhall (EL 3)

Either from Penkus' note or after interrogating a captured thief, the PCs likely seek out the Taxidermist's Guildhall. A relatively modest building, there are two entrances—the front door into the showroom (area **G1**) opens onto Water Street and a locked service entrance from Dead Dog Alley that opens into the workshop (area **G6**).

Creature: The Taxidermist's Guild is run by a lanky, middle-aged man with a gold tooth and a penchant for looking down his nose at customers. This is Nemien Roblach, a pleasant-enough fellow as long as he suspects visitors are here to buy, but quick to anger otherwise. Nemien spends most of his time in his workshop—his current project is a partially completed jaguar on commission for the church of Kord.

When the PCs enter the showroom, they are confronted with dozens of expertly stuffed and preserved animals, ranging from parrots, monkeys, and bats to more exotic creatures like a monstrous centipede, a stirge, and even a black dragon wyrmling. A bell near the door bears a short sign—"Ring for Service."

None of the doors in the guildhall are locked, yet neither do any of the rooms hold anything suspicious that might tie Nemien to the Lotus Dragons—he knows better than to keep anything like that around. If he discovers anyone snooping, he flies into a rage and demands the PCs leave at once. He does not attack unless threatened, or unless the PCs discover the secret door to area **G8** (with a DC 20 Search check).

If he meets the PCs in the showroom, he tries to ascertain their interests quickly and bluntly—all of the stuffed creatures on display are for sale, with prices ranging from 5 gp for a bat up to 500 gp for the stuffed dragon. As soon as he realizes that the PCs aren't really here to buy or commission his work, he asks them to leave, saying, "I'm a busy man, and have no time for solicitors!"

NEMIEN ROBLACH **CR 3**

Male human illusionist 3

CE Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Aquan, Common, Draconic

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10

hp 9 (3 HD)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk sickle +1 (1d4–1)

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +0

Combat Gear *wand of ray of enfeeblement* (29 charges), *wand of mage armor* (20 charges), *potion of cure light wounds*

Spells Prepared (CL 3rd, +3 ranged touch)

2nd—*hypnotic pattern* (DC 15), *invisibility*, *minor image* (DC 15)

1st—*charm person* (DC 13), *color spray* (DC 14), *shield*, *silent image* (DC 14)

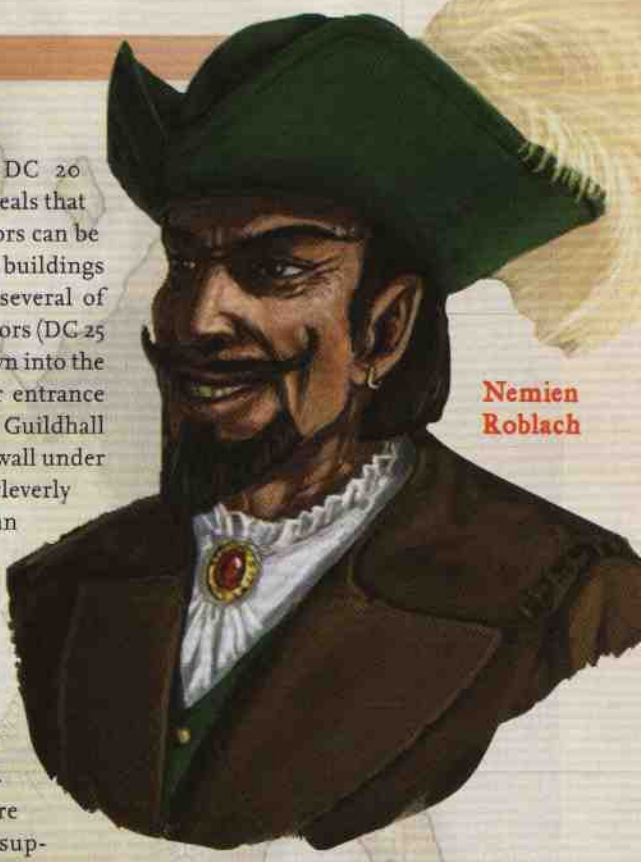
0—*detect magic*, *daze* (DC 12), *ghost sound* (DC 13), *prestidigitation*

Prohibited Schools evocation, transmutation

Abilities Str 8, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 13

SQ summon familiar (rat named Theophilies)

Feats Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (illusion)



Nemien Roblach

Skills Concentration +8, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (nature) +8, Profession (taxidermist) +7, Spellcraft +10

Possessions combat gear, masterwork sickle, four 100 gp pearls, key ring

Spellbook as above plus; 0—all; 1st—*alarm, disguise self, identify, mage armor, ray of enfeeblement, unseen servant*; 2nd—*arcane lock, magic mouth, see invisibility*.

Tactics: Nemien is sure of his skills and confident in his magic, at least until he suffers any damage. His first action in any combat is to cast *invisibility*. On the following round, he casts *minor image* to make it appear that all the stuffed animals in the room are coming to life, hoping to trick the PCs into wasting resources. He maintains the illusion as long as it's working, after which he casts a *silent image* of himself running away, hoping to trick the PCs into leaving. If found out, he casts *shield* and then uses his attack spells as best he can to defeat the PCs.

Treasure: Nemien makes a good living as a taxidermist, but his real source of income is kickbacks from the Lotus Dragons. In a locked (DC 30 Open Lock) chest under his bed in area **G5**, he's stashed his savings—540 gp, 20 pp, and a small pouch of garnets and bloodstones worth 600 gp in all.

Development: If captured alive, Nemien quickly turns on the Lotus Dragons and admits that they pay him to act as their eyes and ears. He allows their members to come and go from his guildhall as they need, and can show the PCs the secret door to area **G8**. He's never been below, but he knows that the "boss lady" has a pet dragon (or something) that he'd dearly love a chance to stuff. Nemien has no illusions as to his fate once he gives up this information, and if not turned over to the city watch he packs a bag and flees for Cauldron as soon as the PCs let him.

Lotus Dragon Guildhall Features

The Lotus Dragon Guildhall is located under Dead Dog Alley, a collection of buildings surrounding a triangular plaza. Most of these buildings are boarded up from the outside and apparently abandoned. A DC 20 Search check of the doors reveals that the boards are a ruse; the doors can be opened with ease. Inside, the buildings are indeed abandoned, but several of them contain hidden trap doors (DC 25 Search to locate) that lead down into the guildhall, area **D10**. Another entrance leads from the Taxidermist's Guildhall to area **D1**. Finally, a wooden wall under the nearby pier is actually a cleverly disguised wide door that can be lifted to allow small boats to pass into area **D17**; this door can be discovered by anyone who makes a DC 25 Search check under the pier.

Inside, the guildhall itself consists of brick-lined tunnels and rooms; both feature numerous wooden ceiling supports. The exceptions to this rule are areas **D1**, **D9**, and **D17–D19**; these areas are of unworked stone. The entire place (with the exception of areas **D31–D33**) is quite damp, with moisture dripping down the walls to drain away through numerous lead pipes set into the floor, eventually emptying into area **D9**. Air quality is serviceable but musty. Doors are made of wood reinforced with iron, and tend to stick. The thieves keep them ajar for this reason; a closed door requires a DC 13 Strength check to open.

The Lotus Dragon Guildhall is inhabited by nearly two dozen thieves (see "The Lotus Dragons" sidebar). These thieves can be encountered in numerous areas, depending on the alert status of the guildhall.

When the guildhall is at rest, only 14 thieves are present. Of these, half sleep in the barracks (area **D3**), with the remainder either eating in the mess hall (**D20**) or training in area **D25**.

When the guildhall is on alert, all the thieves are awake; the room descriptions that follow assume the guild is on alert status and lists the locations of the thieves as appropriate. When on alert, the thieves are quick to make sure every door is closed tightly; this limits their own movement, but also slows the advance of an invading force.

Although there are no wandering monsters in the guildhall, when it's on alert there's a 20% chance every time the PCs enter a new room or hall of encountering a patrol of 3 Lotus Dragon thieves. Only two patrols will be encountered, as all remaining thieves are posted at guard points.

D1. Taxidermy Entrance

A wooden ladder leads up to a trap door in the roof of this natural passageway. Moisture drips from the walls to pool on the rough floor, draining in tiny rivulets to the east. A wooden door beckons to the west.

The trap door in the ceiling here leads up to area **G8** in the Taxidermist's Guildhall.

D2. Guardroom (EL 2)

Creatures: This room is kept empty at times of rest, but when the guild is on alert the north door is closed and the south door is left open so that the two thieves posted here can keep an eye on the door to the south for intruders. If they see any, they raise a cry to alert the rest of the guild and attack with arrows.

Urchin Venom

The Lotus Dragons extract the venom from a breed of sea urchin they farm in their guildhall. This venom is typically used to coat their crossbow bolts or arrows—while not deadly, it quickly nauseates those that succumb to it, giving the thieves a distinct advantage in combat.

Urchin Venom: Injury DC 11, Initial damage nauseated for 1 minute, Secondary damage 1 Str, Price 25 gp.

Involving the Watch

It's possible that, once the PCs get into a war with the Lotus Dragons (or even once they get Penkus' note), they'll take the logical route of reporting to the city watch. Only the Sunrise Watch responds to the PCs; all other watches send the PCs there since they don't see it as a matter involving their district. Unfortunately, the Sunrise Watch has the problem of being spread far too thin; Sunrise is Sasserine's largest district, and there simply aren't enough guards to go around. In addition, the Lotus Dragons have deep pockets, and several high-ranking officials in the Sunrise Watch receive regular "donations" to ensure that any investigations into the guild are perfunctory at best. Attempts to recruit the city watch result in more Lotus Dragon ambushes—it should become apparent to the PCs that they're on their own before long. If they report their suspicions of corruption to Lavinia, she promises to bring up the concern with the Dawn Council, but such issues take time, and by the time the Dawn Council is ready to move on even the best-researched information, it should be too late.

Lotus Dragon Thieves (2): hp 8 each; see page 31.

D3. Barracks

The walls of this long room are lined with dual bunks, eleven in all. The bunks sport sheets spotted with mildew, yet appear to be well-slept in.

The thieves sleep here, but never more than 7 at a time. If the guild's on alert, there are no thieves at all here.

D4. Rum Storage

Four large casks stand against the western wall; judging from the scent in the air, they're filled with rum.

Locked doors have little meaning in a thieves' guild, so the rum stores operate on an honor system. The thieves are allowed to drink in moderation, but drunkenness is not tolerated. Since drunk thieves are usually thrown into the Crucible (area **D9**), they're good about remaining sober.

D5. Cruncher's Pen (EL 2)

The floor of this room is cluttered with partially eaten bones and clumps of dark fur, giving the air the stink of a filthy wet dog.

Creature: A single black-furred worg named Cruncher dwells here, raised from a pup by Rowyn and given this room as his own. Cruncher's smart enough to recognize guild members and doesn't attack them—PCs might be able to slip by the monster unmolested with a good Disguise check.

Cruncher serves the guild in two ways; he helps guard the cellblock to the north, and he helps get rid of prisoners who are no longer of use. He often misses the chance to run free (even though Rowyn takes him out on a boat to race around on a nearby island two nights a month), but the comfort of being fed regularly outweighs this minor inconvenience in his eyes. Cruncher understands a few words in Common, but rarely speaks.

Cruncher is only found here if the guild isn't on alert; otherwise, he's stationed in area **D14**.

Cruncher, worg: hp 30; *Monster Manual* 257.

D6. Cellblock

Five prison cells line the western wall of this hallway. Each cell features a nasty-looking heap of straw, a wooden bucket, and little more. Iron bars close each cell off, with a narrow gate featuring a large lock allowing egress from each.

Unless one of the PCs has been captured by the Lotus Dragons, no prisoners languish in these cells. The locks on the gates can be opened with a DC 30 Open Lock check, but the bars themselves are already beginning to rust. It's only a DC 25 Strength check to break or bend them enough to allow passage.

D7. Guestroom (EL 4)

The purpose of this macabre chamber seems obvious. A stretching rack dominates the northwestern corner of the room, and an open iron maiden its southeast corner. A sizzling brazier of coals sputters in the southwest corner, giving the chamber a hellish red cast.

Jokingly referred to as the "guestroom" by the thieves, this chamber is obviously a well-kept torture chamber. Unless one of the PCs was recently captured, the Lotus Dragons haven't had a reason to use this chamber in the past several weeks, something that it's keeper, Kersh Reftun, regrets.

A DC 20 Search check reveals the secret door in the east wall.

Creature: If the guildhall is on alert, Kersh succumbs to his sense of theatrics and stages a trick here. After setting his magic armor to look like rags (making sure to cover the tattoo on his shoulder), Kersh straps himself into the rack, tying himself in with clever slipknots he can wriggle out of as a move action. (Anyone who examines these bonds and makes a DC 16 Use Rope check realizes the nature of the knots.) He then posts one of the Lotus Dragon thieves in this room to pose as the "torturer," dressing him in a stained leather apron and arming him with knives and branding irons.

When the PCs enter, they find what appears to be a torturer heating several branding irons in the nearby brazier to torment a man dressed in rags tied to the rack. The "torturer" attacks on sight and fights to the death (this thief isn't about to surrender in front of his boss!).

Kersh plays the part of the tormented victim, claiming to be a silk merchant who was kidnapped from his room at the Bent Goblin Inn weeks ago. He begs the PCs to escort him to safety, silently waiting for the best moment to turn on them and attack with surprise (likely as soon as the PCs get into a fight). If the PCs see through his Bluff check, he sneers at them and attacks.

Kersh himself is a muscular man with dark stubble on his chin and short, greasy hair. His eyes are pale and watery, and a Lotus Dragon tattoo graces one shoulder. His knuckles are badly scarred—testament to the use to which he often puts them. Kersh is a crude, foul-mouthed racist with little time or use for dwarves, halflings, or gnomes, although he does his best to hide his baser qualities when playing the part of a victim.

Kersh Reftun **CR 3**
Male human rogue 1/fighter 2
NE Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15
hp 20 (3 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

Spd 30 ft.
Melee* unarmed strike +3 (1d3+4) or red-hot branding iron +2 (1d6+4 plus 1d4 fire)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4
Atk Options sneak attack +1d6
*2-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8
SQ trapfinding
Feats Improved Bull Rush, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Weapon Focus (unarmed strike)
Skills Bluff +3, Disable Device +6, Gather Information +3, Heal +4, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +4, Sense Motive +5, Swim +6, Use Rope +6
Possessions *+1 glamered chain shirt*

Lotus Dragon Thief: hp 8 each; see page 31.

Tactics: If the PCs see through Kersh's trickery, he snatches up a red-hot branding iron (treat as a club) from the brazier if he can. If he can't, he's perfectly capable of fighting barehanded. If he gets a chance, he tries to bull rush a PC into the waiting iron maiden; if he manages to do so, the PC takes 2d6 points of damage from the spikes, with a DC 12 Reflex save halving the damage. If the PC doesn't take a move action to clamber free of the iron maiden, Kersh takes a move action himself to slam the lid, automatically inflicting 10 points of damage on anyone trapped inside.

D8. Kersh's Quarters

This chamber sports a large bed covered with furs. An iron cage sits at the foot, and a low table in the southeast corner is heaped with salted fish, bread, and bottles of rum.

The cage at the foot of the bed isn't quite large enough for a Medium creature to stand or sit in. Kersh sometimes puts those who offend him in the cage for a night so they can watch him sleep comfortably and ponder the poor choices that got them put in the cage in the first place.

Treasure: A footlocker under the bed contains Kersh's wealth—234 gp and a set of silver flensing knives with ivory handles worth a total of 200 gp.

D9. The Crucible (EL 5)

Most of this circular cavern consists of a large pool of brackish-looking water, its surface greasy with filth and rotting seaweed. Dripping lead pipes protrude from the walls of the twenty-foot-high cavern, including one that's nearly two feet in diameter to the east. A five-foot-wide hole in the ceiling seems to lead up to the surface. To the west and south is a five-foot-wide beach of grit and gravel. A narrow tunnel leads up at a shallow angle to the west and out of sight.

This chamber, known as "the Crucible" to the Lotus Dragons, is both a place to test new recruits and to punish and torment the enemy. The pool of water is ten feet deep, and drains into the groundwater through numerous tiny cracks. The smaller pipes protruding from the walls provide drainage for the rest of the complex, while the larger one connects to area **D17**. A Small creature could shimmy up this pipe by making a series of DC 30 Escape Artist checks, only to reach the far end to find it closed off by a metal valve. This valve can be opened in area **D11**, at which point water from the sea cave in area **D17** sluices down into the cave. The water level rises by a foot every two minutes, eventually reaching a height of about eight feet from the cave roof above and flooding the entire cave to an equal depth.

Both secret doors to the west are five feet off the ground. Finding them takes a DC 20 Search check, and actually reaching them is a DC 10 Climb check.

Creature: If the guild is on alert, the Lotus thieves in area **D11** watch this room through the one-way *illusory wall* that separates the rooms, waiting for intruders to drop in from above. When the initial thief drops in, he quickly makes his way to one of the secret doors to the west and thence to join his fellows in area **D11**.

Once any PC lands in the pool, the thieves in area **D11** take two actions. First, they turn the valve to open the pipe to area **D17**, allowing the sea to begin flooding area **D9**. Second, they release the chain holding the crocodile at the end of the western passageway. The reptile roars in excitement as it's unleashed, then rumbles around the corner into the central room to look for food.

Crocodile: hp 22; *Monster Manual* 271.

Tactics: Of course, the PCs have more than a hungry crocodile to deal with in this encounter. The three thieves in area **D11** quickly spread out once the trap is triggered; one remains in area **D11**, while the other two move to sniper points to the east and south in area **D10**. If the PCs were lured here by a Lotus Dragon thief, he does not join in the battle, instead slipping out to warn the rest of the complex.

Starting on the first round of combat, the thief in area **D11** begins to shoot through the one-way illusory wall, targeting PCs not involved in melee with

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The Taxidermist's Guildhall
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The Lotus Dragon Guildhall
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D33
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D24
D31
D21
D22
D25
D26
D27
D28
D29
D23
D32
One Square = 5 feet

Taxidermist's Guildhall Key
G1. Showroom
G2. Storage
G3. Lavatory
G4. Private Meeting Room
G5. Guildmaster's Bedroom
G6. Workshop
G7. Supply Room
G8. Hidden Hall

the crocodile. On round 3, the second thief joins from the arrowslits to the east, and on round 5 the one in the south joins as well. Thieves firing from arrowslits have cover, while the one firing through the illusory wall has total concealment. Note that the rushing sound of the water imparts a –8 penalty on Listen checks, making it difficult to pinpoint the location of the thief in area **D11**; characters who fire blindly through the wall essentially have a 25% chance to target the right square (only then giving them a 50% chance to hit with a successful attack).

D10. The Ring of Ruin

This hallway surrounds the Crucible and connects four domed chambers, each of which sports a wooden ladder leading up to a trap door in the ceiling above. These trap doors open into the abandoned buildings surrounding Dead Dog Alley above.

D11. Observation Room (EL 2)

This narrow room overlooks a larger cave to the south—a barely-perceptible haze hangs in the air between these two rooms, almost as if some sort of membrane were stretched over the opening. Five wooden chairs are arranged before this "window." To the west sits a low table surrounded by more chairs, while to the east a large valve wheel protrudes from the wall.

The "haze" is in fact a special and permanent *illusory wall* that Rowyn paid (at great expense) to install. From this side, the wall is transparent, while from the other side it appears as a solid natural rock wall. The *illusory wall* functions at caster level 9th.

Creatures: If the guild is on alert, three Lotus Dragon thieves wait in this room to spring the Crucible trap (see area **D9** above). If caught in here before the trap can be sprung, they do their best to fight but aren't above fleeing into area **D9** and out through one of the secret doors to the west.

Lotus Dragon Thieves (3): hp 8 each; see page 31.

D12. Visitor's Lounge

This room feels a little drier than the others in the complex, and the air smells slightly less musty. The room itself is furnished as a lounge, complete with stuffed couch and low table.

Long-term visitors to the guild use this room and the one next door to rest and relax; currently, this room is empty.

D13. Visitor's Quarters

This room contains two fairly comfortable-looking bunks. The sheets on them only sport a few spots of mildew.

Visitors to the guild are allowed to sleep in this room. Vanthus spent some time in this room a little over a month ago when he first approached the Lotus Dragons with his plan to murder his parents and use the inheritance to help fund the guild. A DC 20 search of the room locates a scrap of paper wedged between one bunk and a wall, on which a map of the Vanderboren vault is sketched along with row upon row of failed combinations—one of Vanthus' worksheets he used to try to puzzle out area **V3**.

D14. Cruncher's Guardpost (EL 2)

Creature: This room is empty, unless the guild is on alert. In that case, Cruncher the worg (see area **D5**) has been placed here with orders to prevent any non-guildmembers from passing through. He howls loudly as he attacks, alerting the rest of the complex immediately.

Cruncher, worg: hp 30; *Monster Manual* 256.

D15. Meeting Room

A narrow table holds a pair of candles; a chair sits to either side.

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This chamber is used by the guild to meet and interview prospective allies. It is currently empty. If the guild is on alert, the table in this room is missing.

D16. Waiting Room (EL 3)

This room contains a single long bench pushed up against the north wall. A door to the north is marked "Lavatory."

Visitors to the guild spend anywhere between half an hour to two hours waiting in this room before Rowyn decides how to proceed with them. During this time, the occupants of the room are typically observed through a hidden peephole in the southern door (DC 25 Search check to find).

Creatures: If the guild is on alert, four Lotus Dragon thieves have dragged the table from area **D15** into this room and turned it on its side. They huddle behind it, and use it as cover to fire crossbow bolts and arrows at anyone who tries to enter the room from the east. They are ill-prepared to handle any intrusion from the south unless Cruncher's howl alerts them, in which case they shift the table's position as appropriate.

Lotus Dragon Thieves (4): hp 8 each; see page 31.

D17. Smuggler's Pond (EL 3 or 5)

The sound of lapping waves fills this chamber, a natural sea cave that incorperates a large sloshing tidepool. To the north, a low sandy beach seethes with brightly-colored crabs. To the south, a larger sandy beach slopes up to a glistening wall. A short wooden pier protrudes from this beach into the pool, and the cavern winds around the corner beyond. To the north, a large wooden door blocks the cave exit, although the waters flow unimpeded through a large space under the door.

The Lotus Dragons use this cavern to stage smuggling operations or (less often) to recieve visitors to the guildhall. Generally, a visitor has a black bag pulled over his head late in the night before being rowed around the city canals for an hour to disorient him. When he arrives here, he is led into area **D16** through the secret door in the south wall (Search DC 20 to locate from the north side, automatic from the south) before the hood is removed. The crabs on the north shore clatter and clack menacingly, but they are relatively small and harmless. The current denizens of the water are not.

Creatures: To aid in their takeover of Sasserine's sea trade, the Lotus Dragons managed to contact a local tribe of ixitxachitls, intelligent and cruel aquatic monsters that look similar to rays. Six ixitxachitls have taken up residence here. As needed, they swim out into the harbor to take care of any aquatic missions Rowyn requires, and as a result these six are well practiced in the art of gnawing holes in the hulls of offending ships. If the guild is on alert, four of these evil fish patrol this cave while two swim back and forth between this area and **D18**. If either group

finds intruders, they call out to their allies in Aquan for aid and attack at once.

An ixitxachitl has a plain brown or black topside with a lighter colored belly. Its large mouth is filled with razor-sharp teeth and its eyes are intelligent and cruel. The scout, a base class that excels at skirmish-style combat, is detailed in *Complete Adventurer*.

IXITXACHITLS (4) **CR 1**
Male ixitxachitl scout 1
CE Small aberration (aquatic)
Monster Manual II 128
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5
Languages Aquan

AC 18, touch 16, flat-footed 13
hp 11 (1 HD)
Fort +3, **Ref** +7, **Will** +1

Spd swim 30 ft.
Melee bite +3 (1d6+2)
Base Atk +0; **Grp** +2
Atk Options skirmish +1d6

Abilities Str 15, Dex 21, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ trapfinding
Feats Dodge
Skills Escape Artist +9, Hide +13, Listen +5, Move Silently +9, Search +4, Spot +5, Swim +14, Tumble +9

Skirmish (Ex) A scout deals an extra 1d6 points of damage on all attacks he makes during any round in which he moves at least 10 feet. This extra damage applies only to attacks taken during the scout's turn, and applies only to creatures that have a discernible anatomy. The scout must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot.

D18. Urchin Farm (EL 2 or 5)

A large tide pool takes up this room, the waters thick with seaweed and its bed clustered with a veritable carpet of red and black sea urchins.

The Lotus Dragons farm these sea urchins for their venom, although they're careful not to deplete their stock.

Creatures: Two ixitxachitl scouts swim through the waters of this pool once every minute; if they see intruders, they call for aid from their kin in area **D17**.

Ixitxachitl scouts (2): hp 11; see page 39.

D19. Rhagodessa Pen (EL 5)

The walls and floor of this cavern glisten with thick, transparent ooze. Mushrooms protrude from the slop on the floor here and there, and a viscous puddle of green goo shimmers to the south. A large patch of mushrooms grows on the far side of this slime, and what appears to be part of a halfling skeleton lies in the sludge between them.

Creature: Before Vanthus joined the guild, one of the primary sources of income for the Lotus Dragons was smuggling dangerous and exotic animals—they worked as agents for hunters and poachers in the surrounding jungle, purchasing eggs and young monsters and then selling them to smugglers bound for the north. Soller Vark was one such smuggler, and the rhagodessa the Lotus Dragons sold him was one such creature. Rowyn was so intrigued by the strange vermin that she decided to keep four of them as pets. She keeps three of the monsters here, where they are well fed on fish and the occasional vagrant or prisoner. Mindless, the rhagodessas can't tell the difference between Lotus Dragons and anyone else—a brave party could "recruit" these monsters by luring them into the guildhall proper, where they begin to hunt for food.

Rhagodessas (3): hp 22 each; see Appendix.

Treasure: The skeleton is the remains of a hapless thief who tried to infiltrate the Lotus Dragon guildhall a month ago and made the poor choice of investigating this part of the caverns rather than the passage leading south from area **D18**—the Lotus Dragons never even knew the poor halfling made it this far. The skeleton's leather armor and rapier are both rotted or rusted to ruin, but he still wears a gold ring worth 240 gp, a *ring of jumping*, and a *brooch of shielding* capable of absorbing up to 42 more points of damage from *magic missiles*.

D20. Mess Hall

A long banquet table fills this room, leaving barely any clearance to the east and west. A

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large cage filled with listless tropical birds stands to the northwest.

The Lotus Dragons take their meals in this room—since the table itself can only accommodate 11 people at once, the thieves tend to eat at different times. The cage contains a half-dozen birds that quickly begin singing if anyone approaches within five feet of their cage, possibly alerting the cook in area **D21**.

D21. Kitchen (EL 1)

A battered wooden table sits in this room, its surface covered with knives, pots, and other cooking implements. A fireplace to the south keeps this room relatively dry, if smoky. A bubbling cauldron simmers over the fire, the unseen contents filling the room with a bitter stink.

The fireplace chimney rises up through a twisting iron pipe that eventually feeds into an old fireplace in one of the abandoned houses surrounding Dead Dog Plaza, so that when the cook uses the fire to prepare food, the smoke appears to come from a building and doesn't give away the guildhall's location.

This room is also used by the Lotus Dragons' cook, a kobold named Churtle, to distill poison extracted from the urchins in area **D18**. The contents of the cauldron consist of 10 boiling doses of urchin venom.

Trap: If the guild is on alert, Churtle has rigged the boiling cauldron of poison with a length of iron bent back to her hiding spot just behind the door in room **D23**; when anyone opens the door from area **D20**, she triggers the trap, causing the cauldron to catapult out of the fireplace toward the open doorway—and anyone standing within.

Fireplace Catapult: CR 1; mechanical; manual trigger; manual reset; Atk +8 ranged touch (1d6 fire, boiling poison); poison (urchin venom, DC 11 Fortitude save resists, nausea for 1 minute/1 Str); Search DC —; Disable Device DC —.

D22. Pantry

This room is nearly clogged with crates, barrels, and sacks of grain.

There's enough supplies stored here to last the Lotus Dragons for a month.

Treasure: A DC 15 search of this room finds a metal coffer that contains 10 vials of urchin venom. The milky fluid is unlabeled, but identifiable with a DC 12 Knowledge (nature) check.

D23. Churtle's Quarters

A layer of sand and countless seashells covers the floor of this room. A small hammock hangs from hooks driven into the walls to the southeast, just above a heap of blankets and cushions.

Creature: A female kobold named **Churtle** (LE female kobold expert 4, Craft (poison making) +10, Profession (cook) +11), lives here, her obsession with seashells apparent all over the floor. Churtle serves the Lotus Dragons as a cook, and although the thieves pay her well, her true loyalty is to Rowyn, who spared her life two years ago. Churtle's followed her around ever since. Her cooking and poison-making skills are considerable, and she only rarely confuses the two.

Tactics: Churtle hides in the pile of blankets (Hide +7), hoping that no one finds her. She's close to ineffectual in combat, and if confronted yelps in terror and tries to tumble past the PCs to escape to the north.

If she gets away, she immediately flees the guild. If she takes any damage, she breaks down in tears, begging for her life and offering her 53 gp as a bribe to let her go.

Development: Churtle's initial attitude toward the PCs is indifferent, but if she can be made friendly she offers to be that PCs' personal cook and assistant—at least until an opportunity to escape back into the swamp presents itself. If particularly well treated, you might consider having Churtle stick around—she can be a persistent source of comic relief, and her skills make her a fairly competent scout or sentry.

D24. Lavatory

This remarkably clean lavatory features the latest technology in chamber pots.

D25. Training Hall (EL 5)

The floor of this large room is covered with thick padded mats. Throughout the room stand all manner of target dummies made of clothes and armor stuffed with straw, some of which wear bell-studded coats with numerous pockets, and others of which are draped with manacles and chains hung with cheap-looking padlocks. To the west, a wooden stage sits a foot off the floor. A padded throne flanked by potted plants sits on this stage.

The Lotus Dragons use this large room to hone their skills and spar. Rowyn sometimes observes their technique and style from the comfort of the throne, but usually it's either Kersh or Vanthus seated there. Currently, the throne is empty.

The door to the east is closed and locked (DC 25 Open Lock).

Creatures: As the entrance to the inner sanctum of the guild, the Lotus Dragons have chosen this room as their primary defense point. If the guild is on alert, six Lotus Dragon thieves wait here. They've taken six of the target dummies and stashed them in area **D26**, and have taken their place, disguising themselves so that at a glance, the room may seem to be empty.

Lotus Dragon Thieves (6): hp 8 each; see page 31.

Tactics: If they aren't noticed, the thieves wait for the PCs to scatter throughout the room before taking action and drawing their weapons in the surprise round. They work together, flanking foes and focusing initial attacks on lightly armored foes in an attempt to even the odds before facing armored enemies.

D26. Evaluation Room

A single chair sits in one corner of this room. Several target dummies lie heaped on a table to the southeast.

Rowyn, Vanthus, and Kersh use this room to meet with thieves whom they feel need evaluation, either for promotion in the ranks or "demotion" (which equates to being fed to Cruncher).

D27. Guardpost (EL 2)

Creature: This empty room is guarded by a rhagodessa. The vicious arachnid wears an iron collar attached to a chain—the far end of the chain is affixed to a winch in the small room to the north. When she's expecting visitors, Rowyn turns the winch in area **D28**, which retracts the chain and confines the rhagodessa to the room to the north. If the guild is on alert, the rhagodessa's chain is slack, allowing it to reach every corner of this room.

Rhagodessa: hp 22; see Appendix.

D28. War Room

A large hexagonal table made of oak takes up the majority of this room, surrounded by six chairs. The north wall bears a huge map of Sasserine, on which dozens of tiny flags have been placed. To the south, a five-foot-tall and ten-foot-wide slate bears a tangled mess of chalk scribblings. A winch handle protrudes from the northwest corner.

This room is where Rowyn meets with Vanthus, Kersh, and other contacts to plot Lotus Dragon activities in Sasserine. The map to the north is used to track allies, enemies, and organizations that pay protection money to the guild. Blue flags indicate allies, red indicate enemies, and gold indicate sources of income. Although the color system is unexplained, the PCs should be intrigued to see a gold flag protruding from the Vanderboren estate. A red flag protrudes from the Islaran estate and a blue one from the Kellani estate. A few of the city watch garrisons (including the Sunrise garrison) contain both blue and gold flags. Feel free to improvise the placement of other flags.

To the south, the slate is used to track other projects and take notes. The primary piece of information currently on the slate seems to track the comings and goings of ships in the harbor, as well as notations of which ones have been (or are scheduled to be) "holed." A note in the lower left corner, written in Aquan, reads, "Make sure to pay ixitxs. by month end!" In the upper right corner, the PCs may be amused or concerned to see their names listed inside a box, alongside a note in big letters that reads, "VANTHUS! FIX THIS NOW!"

D29. Guard Room (EL 2)

Creature: Several months ago, Rowyn purchased a *wand of animate dead* on the black market. The wand only had a few charges, but it was enough for her to create this room's guardian, a zombie created from a bugbear named Zhanther who once worked for her as a bodyguard—she executed and animated him when she learned that he was stealing from the guild.

Bugbear Zombie: hp 42; *Monster Manual* 267.

D30. Bath

The walls, floor, and ceiling of this chamber have been covered in white marble tile; every inch sparkles cleanly. In the middle of the room sits a five-foot-by-ten-foot pool of clear water. To the northwest stands an unlit iron brazier.

The water in the pool is fresh and clean—Rowyn uses this room to relax, often lighting the brazier to turn the place into a sauna.

D31. Rowyn's Lounge (EL 6)

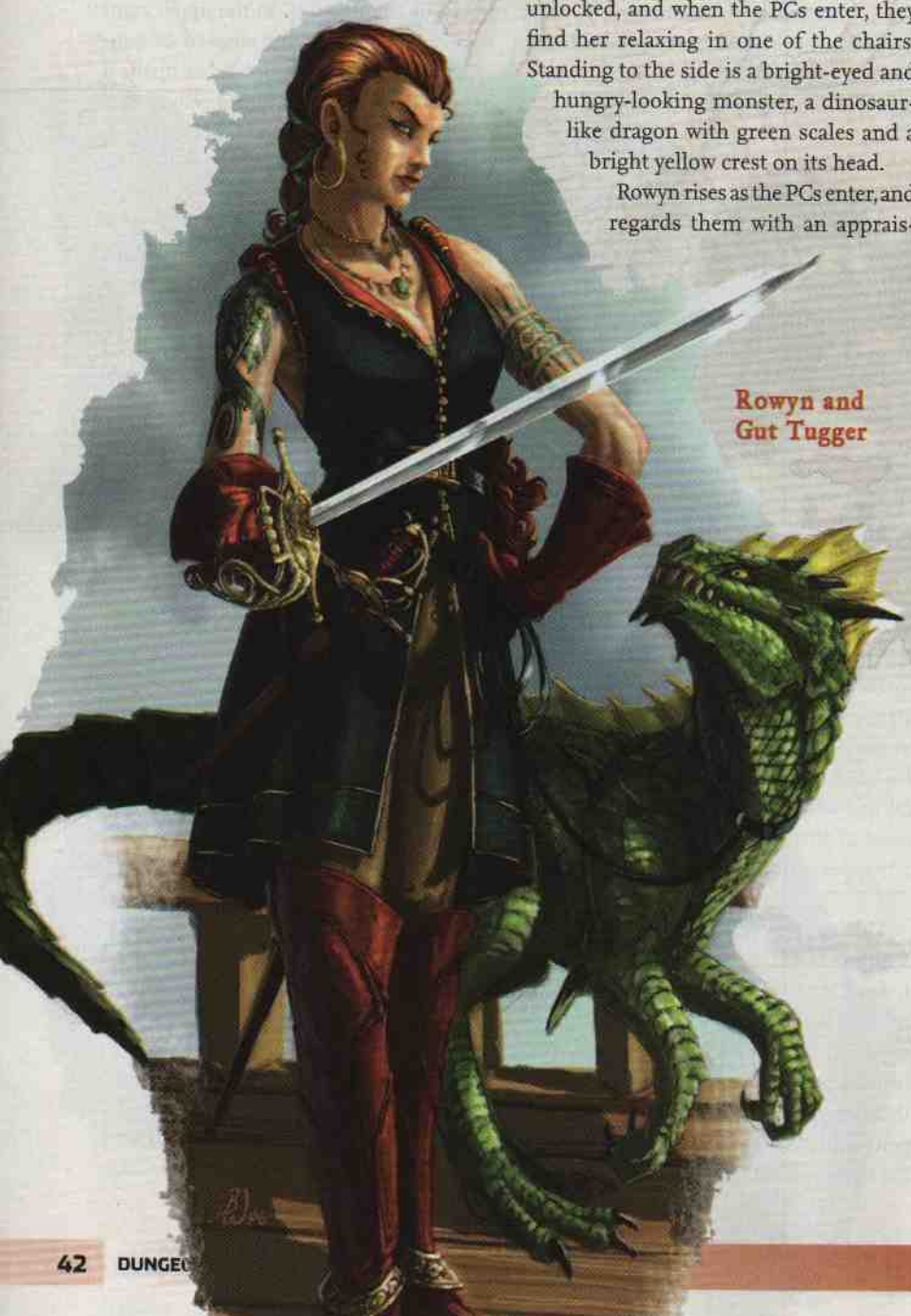
The opulence of this chamber's decor is a bit jarring. The smooth plaster walls are painted violet. Delicately crafted silver lanterns flicker

softly on the wall, lighting the room. A shelf to the north holds several books, statuettes, stuffed animals, a crystal ball with a smoky red light at its core, and two coffers; one of darkwood and one of iron decorated with tiny jade bats. A five-foot-wide landscape of the city of Sasserine hangs on the eastern wall, yet all of the ships in the harbor fly flags depicting a serpentine dragon coiled around a lotus. A pair of overstuffed chairs sits beside a low table heaped with fruit and bottles of wine. To the south stands a lone wooden cupboard. The floor itself is adorned with a thick, deep purple carpet. An open door to the south leads to what appears to be a bedroom.

Rowyn uses this room to entertain guests, take her meals, or simply to relax. She commissioned the painting on the wall several months ago from a local artist with ties to the Crimson Fleet—a woman named Brissa Santos, who at the time was romantically involved with Vanthus. It was through this painting that Rowyn met Vanthus and the two of them became lovers.

Creature: Rowyn, guildmistress of the Lotus Dragons, waits here to confront the PCs. She hopes her thieves and guardians take care of them for her, of course, but if they make it this far, she has a proposal for them. The door to this room is unlocked, and when the PCs enter, they find her relaxing in one of the chairs. Standing to the side is a bright-eyed and hungry-looking monster, a dinosaur-like dragon with green scales and a bright yellow crest on its head.

Rowyn rises as the PCs enter, and regards them with an appraising eye. She addresses them as "Lavinia's flunkies," then boldly offers them a job. They're obviously resourceful folk with strong skills in a fight—would they be interested in working for her instead of Lavinia? Rowyn's offer is legitimate; even though she's a bit angry if the PCs have managed to take down her guild, she's got enough money to rebuild it. And with the PCs working for her, the new Lotus Dragons could be stronger than ever before. Of course, if the PCs refuse her offer or prepare to attack, she sighs with regret and nods to her "pet," giving him the order to attack by saying, "Gut Tugger! Do your thing!"



Rowyn and Gut Tugger

Rowyn herself is a beautiful human woman with long red hair tied back in a ponytail. Her eyes sparkle like chips of green jade, and she moves with an unsettling grace. On one shoulder she wears a tattoo of a lotus, while on the other is an intricate dragon tattoo, its tail coiling down around her arm.

Her "pet" is in fact a bitter, surly crested felldrake named Gut Tugger. While most crested felldrakes are good-aligned and serve as guardians for elven cities or armies, Gut Tugger always had a mean streak. When he killed his packmates over a treasure dispute, his elven keepers tried to put him down. He killed them as well, then fled the elven village only to be captured by animal smugglers. Gut Tugger played the role of a mindless creature, knowing that this was a free ticket to somewhere far from his elven oppressors—he ended up in Sasserine, purchased by Heldrath Kellani as a gift for her daughter. Rowyn and Gut Tugger formed a fast friendship, and he took to her lessons in thievery with shocking ease. Today, Gut Tugger lives an easy life as Rowyn's "pet." Rowyn often lets him wander the guild halls so he can spy on the Lotus Dragons from within. None of the thieves suspect Gut Tugger is intelligent, and more than one pair of loose lips or acts of insubordination have resulted in trips to Cruncher's pen as a result of Gut Tugger's reports to his mistress.

Rowyn Kellani **CR 5**
Female human rogue 3/bard 2

NE Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Aquan, Common, Draconic

AC* 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14
hp 25 (5 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3; evasion
*3-point Combat Expertise

Spd 30 ft.
Melee* +1 *rapier* +3 (1d6+1/18–20)
Ranged mwk hand crossbow +6 (1d4/19–20 plus poison)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, sneak attack +2d6
Special Actions bardic music 2/day (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire courage +1)
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of gaseous form*, *wand of animate dead* (5 charges), *wand of charm person* (35 charges)
Spells Known (CL 2nd)
1st (1/day)—*cure light wounds*, *expeditious retreat*
0 (3/day)—*daze* (DC 12), *ghost sound* (DC 12), *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*
*3-point Combat Expertise

Abilities Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 15
SQ bardic knowledge +4, trapfinding, trap sense +1
Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Weapon Finesse
Skills Balance +12, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +14, Intimidate +4, Jump +12, Knowledge (local) +8, Perform (dance) +10, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +12, Swim +8, Tumble +12, Use Magic Device +8
Possessions combat gear, +1 *leather armor*, masterwork buckler, +1 *rapier*, masterwork hand crossbow with 10 bolts poisoned with black adder venom (Fort DC 11, 1d6/1d6 Con), gold earrings worth 300 gp, bejeweled necklace worth 200 gp, skeleton key (fits all locks in guildhall, including the treasury door)

GUT TUGGER **CR 3**
Male crested felldrake rogue 2
NE Small dragon
Monster Manual II 98
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +7, Spot +7
Languages Common, Draconic, Sylvan

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 17
hp 37 (4 HD)
Immune sleep, paralysis
Fort +6, **Ref** +8, **Will** +3; evasion

Spd 40 ft.
Melee bite +5 (1d8+1)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +0
Atk Options sneak attack +1d6

Abilities Str 12, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10
SQ trapfinding
Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative
Skills Bluff +7, Diplomacy +2, Hide +11, Jump +10, Listen +7, Move Silently +6, Sleight of Hand +9, Spot +7
Possessions *collar of armor* +2 (as *bracers of armor* +2)

Tactics: Rowyn lets Gut Tugger engage the PCs first, taking the first round to use inspire courage. She then uses Tumble to flank Gut Tugger's opponent. The two focus their attacks on one enemy at a time. Rowyn uses Combat Expertise in all fights, and when she's not flanking makes use of Improved Feint to score sneak attacks. If any PCs are slain, Rowyn uses her *wand of animate dead* on the bodies to raise them as zombies—likewise, she'll do the same to Gut Tugger if he's killed (although she performs this act through tears). If she's reduced to less than 15 hit points, she retreats and drinks her *potion of gaseous form*, then flees into the nearest drainage pipe located at the wall's base. Once she reaches area **D9**, she escapes the guildhall through the closest trap door—she does not return to this complex, leaving the PCs to loot what they will.

Treasure: The bookshelf to the north holds several minor objects of value. The books themselves are novels, mostly adventure stories or erotica, none of particularly high value. Some of the statuettes are valuable though, including an alabaster statuette of a succubus worth 350 gp, an onyx statuette of a displacer beast worth 100 gp, and a silver statuette of a rearing unicorn worth 500 gp. The stuffed animals consist of small but dangerous creatures like stirges, cobras, Small monstrous spiders, and even what looks to be a giant shrew the size of a cat. None of these are worth much more than a few gold coins.

The two coffers on the shelves are jewelry boxes, each worth 150 gp. The

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Switching Sides

Of course, there's a chance that the PCs end "There Is No Honor" by accepting Rowyn Kellani's offer. While this Adventure Path assumes the PCs turn her down, it can certainly continue if they don't—the adventures to come simply take on a much different tone. As their first job, Rowyn may ask the PCs to perform any number of increasingly dangerous and sinister tasks to set things into motion for the Lotus Dragon takeover of the harbor. Eventually, when Vanthus doesn't return from his journey to rob the pirates in Kraken's Cove, she'll send them to investigate.

darkwood coffer contains seven silver and gold chain necklaces and bracelets worth a total of 300 gp. The iron box contains a dozen rings and earrings worth a total of 550 gp. The wooden cupboard contains several different articles of clothing sized for a human woman, including three courtier's outfits (worth 30 gp each), a noble's outfit worth 75 gp, and a flowing (and scandalous) robe of shimmering lavender silk worth 450 gp.

D32. Rowyn's Bedroom

The floor of this room is thickly carpeted, and the walls have been smoothed with plaster and painted a soothing light green. A delicate crystalline chandelier hangs from the center of the ceiling. To the south, a dressing table sits next to a padded stool, and a large canopied bed with silk sheets looms to the southeast. Between these two objects sits a heap of oversized cushions.

This room is Rowyn's private sanctum, a place to relax and sleep. Lately, Vanthus has been sharing her bed, although he's not present at this time (having headed east out of the city on another project). The pile of cushions serves as a bed for Gut Tugger.

The secret door to the north can be discovered with a DC 20 Search check.

Treasure: A search of the dressing table turns up a large collection of exotic and expensive perfumes—24 vials in all. Twenty of these are worth 10 gp apiece, but the last four are truly exotic imports from places with names like Mur, Alfheim, and Sigil. Each of these three vials is worth 200 gp. The final vial comes from a place named Shendilavri, and contains six doses that grant the wearer a +10 competence bonus on Diplomacy checks for 1 hour. One dose of this intoxicating perfume is worth 200 gp.

A DC 20 Search of the bed finds a small cache of letters hidden between the mattreses. Investigation reveals that these letters are from none other than Vanthus; they are exceptionally racy love letters written to Rowyn and dating back several weeks. It'll take an hour to read through them all, but there are a few pieces of information found in the letters (mostly in the more recent ones) of particular interest to the PCs, as excerpted in Handout #5.

D33. Guild Treasury (EL 4)

The door to this room is locked and trapped. A DC 30 Open Lock check unlocks the door, but also triggers the trap (as does using the correct key, if the key is turned counter-clockwise in the lock).

This plain stone room is empty, save for three large chests made of wood and iron.

Trap: Several traps ward the contents of this room. The first is built into the treasury door. The only safe way to open this door is to insert the proper key and turn the key clockwise to unlock the door; any other attempt to open the door triggers a poison dart trap in the northern wall; the darts fire at anyone standing in the 15-foot-long hall between this room and area **D32**.

The second trap consists of a bed of hundreds of needle-thin spikes hidden in the floor. This trap triggers as soon as anyone enters the room, but has an onset delay of 3 rounds. After this time passes, anyone in the room is suddenly struck by these spikes. The chest in the northeastern corner of the room is in fact a false chest; opening the chest disarms the trap, while closing it resets the trap (also resetting the 3 round delay).

Poison Dart Trap: CR 3; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +8 ranged (1d4+4 plus poison, dart); multiple targets (1 dart per target in hall), poison (black adder venom; DC 11 Fort; 1d6 Con/1d6 Con); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 22.

Footlancer Trap: CR 2; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; switch bypass; spikes shoot out of floor (1d6, damage as caltrops, *Player's Handbook* 126); never miss; onset delay (3 rounds); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 22.

Treasure: As mentioned above, the northeast chest is little more than a disguised switch to bypass the footlancer trap. The northwest chest is locked (Open Lock DC 30), but not trapped. Inside is a fantastic amount of stolen wealth These items represent the work of countless minor burglaries and thefts perpetrated upon Sasserine over the past several months. The total value of the stolen goods in this chest is 5,450 gp.

The southwest chest is locked (Open Lock DC 30). Within is a fantastic amount of gold and gemstones—all of which are neatly collected in silk bags bearing the Vanderboren family crest. The contents of this chest represent all that remains of the wealth that Vanthus stole from the Vanderboren vault, and amounts to 8,600 gp in all. An honorable party will, of course, return it all to Lavinia (who rewards them handsomely for such honesty).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

At the end of this adventure, the PCs should have destroyed the Lotus Dragon operation and saved Sasserine from losing control of their harbor. Although the city watch and the Dawn Council might not realize it at first, the painting from Rowyn's lounge and the documents and maps in the war room should be more than enough to prove the magnitude of the service the PCs provided to the city. If you're using the affiliations detailed in *Dragon* #348, this accomplishment grants a +1 bonus to the

affiliation score of anyone belonging to the Dawn Council.

The Savage Tide Adventure Path assumes that Rowyn Kellani escapes the PCs, as she returns in the third adventure, "The Sea Wyvern's Wake." If the PCs capture her, you should have them learn of her escape from prison some time during "The Bullywug Gambit." If she's killed in this adventure, you'll need to make a few changes to "The Sea Wyvern's Wake," as detailed in that adventure. Whether she survives or not, her family soon finds out what role the PCs played in the ruin of the Lotus Dragons. While they had no direct hand in the guild's affairs, the Kellani family did know about Rowyn's involvement, and the dutiful daughter provided her estate with regular tithes from her guild. Angered at this loss of income and the humiliation, Heldrath Kellani takes action during the next adventure to punish the PCs for their actions in this adventure.

At some point several days after they defeat the Lotus Dragons, a representative of the Dawn Council invites the PCs to a banquet and dance at Castle Teraknian so that the members of the council can thank them in person for the services they provided to Sasserine. At the end of the banquet, Lord Worrin Lidu presents each PC with the Spire of Sasserine, a medal awarded to those who perform great services to the city. Anyone wearing this medal finds that it grants a +2 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy and Gather Information checks made in Sasserine.

Lavinia Vanderboren certainly won't forget the PCs as well. News that her brother was responsible for her parents' death shocks her, but she recovers quickly, steeling her resolve to put the whole affair behind them. She gives each PC a 1,000 gp bonus for their services, and when she gets a chance asks them to continue investigating Vanthus' whereabouts. Thoughts of rehabilitation have left her mind now, though—all she wants is to see her brother face justice for his crimes. This plotline is the focus of he next adventure in the Savage Tide Adventure Path, "The Bullywug Gambit."

Excerpts from Vanthus's Letters to Rowyn Kellani
(Dated 2 days before the fire that slew the elder Vanderborens)

"...My parents have grown soft. I'm not worried in the slightest that they suspect anything, my delicate flower. The funds you've trusted me with have been more than enough to pay off the local guards, the harbor watch, and the ship's crew to say nothing about the new cargo. Hell... they even offered to help load the barrels! Of course, I didn't tell them what was inside—I'm sure they'd sing a different song if they knew just how much alchemist's fire we loaded into the hold of my father's new plaything. I'll be following the ship's progress for a few days to make sure the fire does the trick, so you'll not be seeing me for at least half a week. Keep your bed warm for me!"

(Dated 3 days after the fire)

"...It's unbelievable! Sure, she's the eldest sibling, but she knows nothing of life! She spent the last half of her childhood in Thenalar learning how to fold napkins and play the violin, for Hell's sake! It just goes to show you how insane my parents really were... leaving everything in her care like that! Whatever. She'll need the house to live off of, I suppose. Lavinia's not a bad lass, really... I kind of miss our time together, to tell the truth. Think she'd be interested in joining the Lotus? I doubt it. And anyway, a second Vanderboren tragedy might get too many people curious. No, for now, whatever's in the vault will have to do..."

(Dated two days ago)

"...I really wish you could have been there, my little dragon, to see their faces before I closed the door! Lavinia's never going to get anywhere hiring fools like them. I wonder if they've found Penkus yet? I hope they didn't die too quickly."

"In any case, on to the purpose of this letter. Brissa's in the other room, getting ready for a night out on the town, so I'll have to be quick. Remember that thing she hinted about to me? About the pirates who were supposedly using Kraken's Cove as a base for their smuggling operation? Turns out she wasn't spinning tales—I've heard that they'll be arriving within the week with a particularly rich cargo. I'll bring her with me on the pretext of joining up with them, get their guard down, and when they're not expecting it my men'll light the ships on fire! It'll be a simple task to pluck the treasure from the water once all those fools are dead. Should be more than enough to make up for what we lost when Lavinia inherited rather than me."

"I tell you... burning people to death on their own boats? It's the best way to make money yet. Wish I'd thought of it years ago!"

Handout #5

APPENDIX: NEW MONSTER

Rhagodessa

A spider-like creature the size of a pony skitters out of the pit. The creature's body is dark brown with yellow stripes, its furred legs long and spindly. The front pair of its ten legs rear up threateningly, their tips flattening into terrible discs studded with dozens of hooked suckers. The monster's head is horrifically oversized, dominated by immense mandibles that chatter and clack with obvious hunger.

RHAGODESSA **CR 2**

Always N Medium vermin

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 22 (4 HD)

Immune vermin traits

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3

Spd 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

Melee 2 pedipalps +7 (0 damage) and bite +5 (1d8+6)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +11

Atk Options Spring Attack, improved grab (pedipalp), powerful bite

Abilities Str 19, Dex 12, Con 13, Int —, Wis 14, Cha 6

Feats Multiattack[B], Spring Attack[B]

Environment any underground

Organization solitary, pair, or brood (3–8)

Treasure none

Advancement 5–6 HD (Medium), 7–12 HD (Large)

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, a rhagodessa must hit with a pedipalp attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it can make a bite attack as a free action, gaining a +4 bonus on its attack roll with this attack. The tiny hooks and tenacious suckers the rhagodessa uses to clutch its prey tear flesh if a grappled creature escapes with an opposed grapple check, causing 1d4 points of damage to the escaping creature. A creature that escapes being grappled by making an Escape Artist check does not suffer this damage.

Powerful Bite (Ex) A rhagodessa's bite is always a secondary attack, yet the powerful muscles in its jaws allow it to apply 1.5 times its Strength modifier to damage rolls with its bite.

Bonus Feat Rhagodessas gain Multiattack and Spring Attack as bonus feats.

This primeval vermin lacks the venomous stinger or crushing claws of a scorpion, but makes up for it with its jaws—nearly a third of the creature's weight is accounted for in its powerful mandibles. These arachnids are nocturnal hunters that dwell in caverns, moving out into the surrounding countryside to seek food well after the sun has set.

Although they're all but mindless, rhagodessas are also creatures of habit. Once a rhagodessa finds a hunting ground that's fertile, it tends to remain close to its new lair. This trait makes the rhagodessa an excellent guardian; as long it's kept relatively well-fed, a rhagodessa settles into any small cavern or underground chamber and remains content to stay there, only rarely wandering into trouble in any nearby regions.

Scaling the Adventure

"There Is No Honor" is designed for a group of four 1st-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 2nd–3rd level characters. Simply adjust any NPC character levels up by 1 for every level by which your party's average exceeds 1. Advance all the rhagodessas encountered in the adventure by 2 Hit Dice. Add a second or even a third iron cobra to the vault. In the smuggler's tunnels, the PCs should encounter groups of ravenous zombie pirates in mobs of 3–5; feel free to add more creatures to the abandoned tunnels as well, such as larger monstrous crabs or even sharks to the sea caves. Advance Cruncher to 6 Hit Dice, and consider giving him the fiendish creature template. Replace the crocodile in the Crucible with a giant crocodile or a carrion crawler. Raise the save DC for urchin venom by 2.

James Jacobs is the Editor-in-Chief of DUNGEON. *He thanks David Cook and Tom Moldvay for their classic adventure (and the primary inspiration for the Savage Tide Adventure Path) "The Isle of Dread," David Noonan for giving Sasserine a name, and of course Chris Thomasson for coming up with the idea for the Adventure Paths in the first place.*

Turns out, it was a pretty good idea, Chris!

THE PORTENT

by Peter Bergting

WOW, WE'RE HERE!
SO EASY TO FIND! I WAS BORN TO DO THIS STUFF!
AND THE TREASURE IS MINE!
I THINK THIS DUNGEON IS FAKE.
WHY WOULD ANY ONE MAKE A DUNGEON OUT OF BALSA WOOD?

Savage Tide
Sasserine

BY JAMES JACOBS
BY BEN WOOTEN
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI

Sasserine began not as a city, but as a woman. Over 700 years ago, a cleric of Wee Jas named Sasserine woke one night after a particularly vivid dream of a hidden cove, protected from the sea by vast cliffs and from the land by steaming swamps and jungle. In this vision, she beheld a thriving city and a glittering spire of scarlet stone, and knew Wee Jas had visited her with a prophecy. Sasserine called together her followers, including her lover Teraknian, a soldier and worshiper of Kord, and set out to find this hidden cove. Diseases, accidents, and monsters took their toll, and near the end, despair gnawed at Sasserine's pilgrims. Finally, their numbers reduced to less than a quarter of their initial strength, these pilgrims emerged into a bounteous stretch of land with fertile soil and fields of exotic plants sheltered by twin shoreline cliffs. Sasserine recognized the landscape at once, but Wee Jas had not warned her of the black dragon that had taken the cove as his territory. Mere hours after the pilgrims had thankfully fed on the abundant plants and had only just begun to hope they had found their new home, the dragon Zelkarune struck. Enraged at this final trial, Sasserine stood her ground against the dragon and defeated it—but at a terrible cost. For in delivering the final strike, Sasserine had been forced to step between Zelkarune's claw and Teraknian; the blow meant for him instead laid her low, just as she called down a bolt of fire from the sky to slay the dragon.

In the days to follow, the survivors turned to Teraknian for leadership, who vowed to found a city in Sasserine's name. It was the year –124 CY, and over the seven centuries to follow, Sasserine would mature into one of the great hidden wonders of the south.

SASSERINE IN BRIEF

Sasserine is located at the westernmost edge of the Amedio Jungle, nestled in a sheltered harbor. Most travelers come to Sasserine via ship, as overland routes are fraught with peril. From the sea, Sas-

serine isn't much to look at; two ragged cliffs of stone jut from the coastline, their faces home to seahawks and gulls but little else. Then a vast rent in the cliff slides into view, its summit crowned by the shattered remnants of an immense stone bridge. Sailing between the slowly eroding stone pylons that once supported the bridge above, a visitor passes from open sea into a thriving harbor of commerce, whaling, and intrigue. Certainly the smell of the city is breathtaking—a tremendous riot of exotic spices, smoke, humanity, and sewage that assaults the senses. Perfumes and scented candles are popular commodities in Sasserine.

Sasserine is split into seven distinct districts, each with its own personality. These districts are separated by inner walls, by networks of canals or rivers, or simply by age. Friendly competition between the districts is common, especially during festivals, yet the citizens of Sasserine do not hesitate to come to each other's aid. Perched at the edge of civilization, Sasserine is (and has always been) often the target of assault from land and sea; the pirates of the Crimson Fleet, the navy of the Scarlet Brotherhood, the frog-like bullywugs of the surrounding marshland, and even gangs of ogres and giants from the nearby mountains keep the city on constant alert, yet to date the fiercely proud city has fallen to the enemy only once, and even then only through the act of the city's most notorious traitor.

Sasserine (Large City): Conventional; AL NG; Population 15,650; 40,000 gp limit; Assets 31,300,000 gp; Mixed (77% human, 6% half-elf, 5% halfling, 4% gnome, 4% dwarf, 2% elf, 1% half-orc, 1% other).

Sasserine's History

For 150 years after its foundation in –124 CY, Sasserine experienced phenomenal growth. In 30 CY, Sasserine had its first conflict with the notorious assassins and slavers of the Scarlet Brotherhood. Brotherhood wizards and clerics managed to destroy the stone bridge known as Teraknian's Arch and burned much of the waterfront before the defenders managed to repulse the attack. Over the next four centuries, Sasserine would be variously assaulted by the Scarlet Brotherhood, the Great Kingdom, and local tribes of giants and bullywugs once or twice a decade, so tempting were the vast plantations of coffee and spices the city protected. Yet with each assault, the soldiers of Sasserine grew more adept at defending their city. Teraknian's Arch was rebuilt and destroyed nearly a dozen

times. The final decision to abandon the bridge entirely and leave it in ruins marks the only remaining physical scar from years of warfare.

Over the years, a line of lord-mayors descended from Teraknian ruled Sasserine in conjunction with advice from the churches of Wee Jas and Kord. In the year of 480 CY, Orren Teraknian ruled the city. For the first time in centuries, the church of Wee Jas was stripped of its power when fabricated charges of devil-worship led to the arrest, imprisonment, and even execution of its faithful. Just as Orren's rule became unbearable, a great fleet of ships arrived—representatives of the Hold of the Sea Princes to the north. Promising an end to Orren's cruel rule, the invaders were aided in their assault on the city from within as the citizens rose up in rebellion. Orren Teraknian was overthrown and the Sea Princes claimed Sasserine as their own. Over the century to come, Sasserine's resources were savaged. The Sea Princes kept Sasserine a secret from the rest of the world, hoping to hide the valuable port from invaders by destroying any references they could find to it. Spies infiltrated cartographer guilds and libraries throughout the world, altering maps and sea charts with magic. Ship captains who knew the route to the city were bought off or murdered. Sasserine suffered in these 100 years, but the underlying spirit of her citizens did not die.

Their prayers were finally answered in 584 CY, when the Scarlet Brotherhood assassinated nearly all of the Sea Princes. The resulting turmoil threw Sasserine into chaos. Without the support of their homeland, the leaders of the city were overthrown in a fortnight.

In the decade since their emancipation, the people of Sasserine have rebuilt their city with astonishing alacrity, but they still work to restore their navy, to re-establish trade routes with lands to the north, and to heal the rift of hatred between the churches of Kord and Wee Jas. Burgeoned by events in their sister city of Cauldron (which recently survived a disaster of its own), the city of Sasserine seems to be perched on the edge of glory.

Sasserine's Citizens and Enemies

Sasserine is governed by a council of seven noble families known collectively as the Dawn Council. Decisions are put to a vote amongst the city's citizens, and their appointed representatives among the nobility take the results of these votes to guide their leadership in the Dawn Council.

Money once again flows into the city coffers as the trade routes are reestablished, bolstered by the trove of absconded funds recently liberated from the Sea Princes. Dress style in Sasserine ranges from rags to riches, but the one thing that applies across all classes is the fact that in this hot, humid city, less is more. Public nudity is generally frowned upon, but it's not uncommon to see outfits that leave little to the imagination (for better or for worse).

After a hundred years of oppression, the law in Sasserine has finally relinquished its stranglehold on the citizens. Murder, arson, treason, assault, theft, and other violent or destructive crimes remain illegal and are severely punished by the Sasserine Watch, but lesser crimes (drug trade, prostitution,

gambling, vagrancy, and similar offenses) remain unrestricted. Many come to Sasserine precisely because of the fact that their vices may be pursued here without fear of legal repercussions. Some public groups (in particular, the church of St. Cuthbert) are attempting to rally the Watch back to more conservative ways, but for now the income generated by visitors and the recent memories of repression serve to keep the majority of the city's populace open-minded and accepting.

Each of the seven districts of Sasserine is represented not only by an appointed noble, but by an allied church. Traditionally, the seven churches of Sasserine have been on good terms, but unfortunately the last 100 years have placed an undue strain upon them. In particular, the faithful of Wee Jas and Kord have suffered. The terrible rift of suspicion and hatred that formed between these churches during Orren Teraknian's rule exists to this day. The remaining four primary religions include Olidammara (in the guise of a fictitious patron saint of merchants named Worgul), Pelor, Fharlanghn, and St. Cuthbert. The final church is in fact comprised of the worship of three sea deities: Osperm, Procan, and Xerbo. Numerous smaller shrines can be found in Sasserine, each dedicated to different gods, but these shrines rarely have congregations of more than 50. There are few evil religions operating in the shadows of the city—the two most notable are the secret cult of Vecna that uses the Historian's Guild as a cover, and a fairly sizable temple of Nerull hidden below one of the plantation houses south of the city.

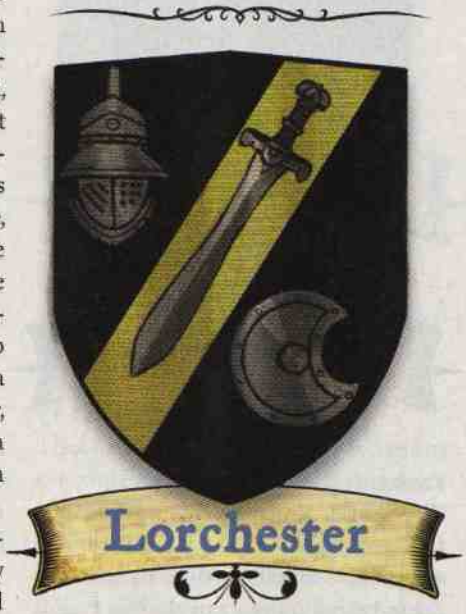
The Scarlet Brotherhood has traditionally been an enemy of the city, but times may be changing. A diplomatic monk named Anteki Alresian represents the Brotherhood in Sasserine. Anteki's methods are a bit unorthodox for the Brotherhood—he openly acknowledges his allegiances and asks the same of those who serve under him. Meanwhile, the Scarlet Brotherhood's plans for Sasserine remain hidden, possibly even from their amiable ambassador.

SASSERINE MAP KEY

Sasserine is divided into seven distinct districts, each of which has a distinct feel and theme. Important locations (temples, noble villas, guildhalls, and the like) are detailed on the following pages. What isn't detailed here are the numerous inns, shops, guildhalls, shrines, and taverns that can be found inside the city walls. While many of these locations are keyed on the map, their descriptions are not presented here. Instead, information concerning these locations is given in the Savage Tide Player's Guide, available at paizo.com.

Castle Teraknian

Castle Teraknian is not in any of the seven districts, and yet it belongs to all of them. Below the castle are the King's Crypts—burial chambers for the Teraknian Line. This area has been closed off as well; the only portion of the castle basement still in use is the Noble's Vault, a place for Sasserine's nobility to store valuables away from their personal estates.



A1: Whaler's Guildhall

The Whaler's Guild is overseen by **Captain Shadwik** (LE male human rogue 4/fighter 4), a gruff, grizzled man grown too old to ply the seas but still crafty enough to helm one of Sasserine's most prosperous guilds.

A2: Azure Cathedral

Those who worship at the Azure Cathedral offer their prayers to one of three deities as the need requires. Those seeking safety on long sea voyages pray to Osprem, the goddess of ships and sailors. People who fear the wrath of the sea offer prayers to Procan, the god of the sea. And those who seek riches from the sea pray to Xerbo, the god of sailing for profit. The Azure Cathedral is tended by a flock of twelve acolytes and led by a soft-spoken man named **Belrain Daskeral** (N male human cleric 7).

A3: Islaran Manor

The Islarans have handed down the post of Harbormaster from one patriarch to the next for generations. The current lord is **Keltar Islaran** (NG male human expert 5/aristocrat 3), a tired old man who expected to hand over the title of harbormaster to his eldest son Aaron in a few years. Unfortunately, both Aaron and Keltar's favorite daughter Alyssa vanished a few years ago, leaving him with only three daughters more interested in marrying into other families and a son who's deathly afraid of the water.

A4: Dredger's Guildhall

The Dredger's Guildhall is run with an almost horrifying glee by an obese dwarf named **Maklash Gristwhistle** (LN male dwarf expert 5/rogue 2). Maklash and his boys patrol the canals and waterways of Sasserine, clearing obstructions and gathering refuse and waste into large tanks in their barges for proper disposal in the great furnaces that belch putrid black smoke into the sky at all hours of the day.

Map Key

Each of the following locations is keyed to one of the seven districts. For ease of reference, the letter code in a location's number represents the district's patron deity:

A (Azure Cathedral): Azure District
K (Kord): Champion's District
C (St. Cuthbert): Cudgel District
F (Fharlanghn): Merchant's District
O (Olidammara): Shadowshore
P (Pelor): Sunrise District
W (Wee Jas): Noble District

A5: Kellani Manor
The Kellanis have quickly established a name for themselves as a greedy family willing to do nearly anything to get ahead in the nobility. Most believe that matroness **Heldrath Kellani** (LE female human rogue 6/aristocrat 2) bought her way into nobility with the vast wealth acquired during her days as an adventurer (some might say pirate)—and they're right. Rumor holds that Heldrath is ailing and will soon be naming her daughter **Rowyn Kellani** (NE female human rogue 3/bard 2) as the family matron.

A6: East Market
East market's vendors hawk seafood, whale oil, ambergris, scrimshaw art, and exotic animals.

K1: Lorchester Manor
The Lorchesters came to Sasserine many centuries ago, when a schism split their family over the rights of rule in the northern city of Redshore. Today, the family is ruled by the canny and somewhat scheming **Neldrak Lorchester** (LN male human aristocrat 7), whose primary obsession is plotting to gain control of Sasserine's lumber industry.

K2: Zelkarune's Hall
The headquarters of a mercenary company called Zelkarune's Horns, this large building serves as both a meeting hall, public museum, and adjunct to the nearby arena. Led by the charismatic and likable "reformed barbarian" **Zasker Grankus** (NG male human barbarian 6/fighter 2), Zelkarune's Horns has become one of the most successful organizations in Sasserine.

K3: Sasserine Arena
The most popular attractions held here are the gladitorial fights sponsored and operated by Zelkarune's Horns. These fights are generally not to the death when only people are involved, but are often used to settle debts. More often, members of Zelkarune's Horns hold public competitions among themselves to determine who among them is the greatest.

K4: House of Kord
The oldest structure in Champion's District is the temple of Kord. Made of black basalt, this cathedral's spires reach nearly 150 feet into the sky in places. The cathedral is presided over by a no-nonsense priest named **Tormagal Gred** (CG male human cleric 9/fighter 3).

K5: Kord's Market
Kord's Market is open during the morning and early afternoon, at which time weapons, armor, and metalwork of all kinds can be found for sale.

K6: Scarlet Embassy
The Scarlet Embassy was built only a few years ago over the site of a noble villa whose members were slaughtered during the final years of the Sea Prince rule. This building now serves as the living quarters for **Anteki Alresian** (LN male human monk 7) and his staff. Cynics hold that Anteki's merely lulling Sasserine into a false sense of security for a Brotherhood assault from the sea.

K7: Toregson Manor
The Toregsons are Sasserine's newest noble family, ascended to this honor when another family, the Pikes, were forced a year ago to sell their family home after they fell upon hard times associated with the abduction of one of their daughters. **Lord Urik Toregson** (NG male human aristocrat 3/expert 2) also owns the Smith's Guildhall in the Merchant District.

C1: Low Market
Low Market is the lesser of Cudgel District's markets—little goes on here save for the sale of food, firewood, and miscellaneous tools.

C2: Church of the Whirling Fury
A mystery to most of Cudgel's citizens, the exact nature of the ceremonies and rituals that take place in this innocuous-looking church are subject to wild speculation. Popular rumors hold that the members worship a vengeful storm god and that they sacrifice animals to prevent storms from harming the city. Only a strange symbol above the door depicting a vortex of wind and swords gives any hint as to what goes on within. A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check is good enough to recognize this symbol for what it represents.

In truth, the Church of the Whirling Fury is a place of worship for those dedicated to the eladrin paragon Gwynharwyf. Her faithful consist of only a few dozen, and of these only six know her by name; the others simply worship her as the Whirling Fury—the embodiment of rage against evil. The cult is led by a mysterious woman known only as **Lady Silvermane** (CG female elf barbarian 6/champion of Gwynharwyf 2; this prestige class is detailed in the *Book of Exalted Deeds*).

C3: Temple of St. Cuthbert
One of the best-attended churches in the city, this temple recently received a staggering influx of support from Sasserine's sister city of Cauldron. After the recent death of its high-priest, the Sasserine Temple came under the care of **Father Ruphus Laro** (LN male human cleric 7), a kindly priest who grew up in Cauldron.

C4: Stonemason's Guildhall
The Sasserine Stonemasons are charged with the upkeep of the city's walls. Beyond this charge, they hire

themselves out to the rich, building stone mansions or castles as required in the surrounding region (or in Sasserine itself). The Stonemason's Guild is led by a gregarious dwarf named **Tenkar Gritbeard** (LG male dwarf expert 8).

C5: West Market

West Market is Cudgel District's busiest market. Bustling at all daylight hours, the market's primary specialty is wood and lumber, but anything from groceries to livestock to medicine can also be found for sale here.

C6: Taskerhill Manor

Cudgel District's oldest noble family are the Taskerhills, a name that today has become synonymous with fantastic wealth and lumber—the family has owned and operated Thunder River Lumber for centuries. Led by a proud and eloquent man named **Kalmadar Taskerhill** (NG male human aristocrat 10), the Taskerhills have only the best interest of Cudgel District at heart. Unfortunately, this interest has led to an unfortunate bit of elitism.

C7: House of Violets

This beautiful monastery perches on the southern rim of Crab Pond. Unknown to the public, and even to ambassador Anteki of the Scarlet Embassy, the House of Violets is in fact a front for the Scarlet Brotherhood. The monastery's abbot, **Gerialar Divalean** (LE male human monk 5/assassin 3) has been charged with keeping an eye on Anteki by their mysterious masters, and for now is content to merely perpetuate the monastery's façade.

F1: Harbor Market

Harbor Market remains busy at all hours of the day and night, although it's at its peak during lunch hours.

F2: Temple of Fharlanghn

The temple of Fharlanghn is little more than a shrine tended by a small staff of a half-dozen clerics. This isn't to say that the citizens of the Merchant District are godless, just that of all Sasserine's districts, these folk represent the widest range of faiths. **Lirali Woarali** (N female half-elf cleric 8) honestly wouldn't have it any other way.

F3: Merchant's Guildhall

Guildmaster **Dhalven Miomar** (LN male human expert 6) tries to remain a neutral party among the movers and shakers of Sasserine, so he can more efficiently and honestly tend to the needs of the city's merchants (many of whom bicker and squabble, being directly tied to competing concerns).

F4: Smith's Guildhall

This fortified stone building functions not only as a guildhall for Sasserine's smiths, but as a productive and well-staffed forge as well. The guildhall is efficiently run by **Velkandar Toregson** (NG male human expert 6/fighter 1), the eldest son of the Toregson family.

F5: Arabani Manor

Anwyn Arabani (CG female half-elf aristocrat 6/bard 3) claims to be of drow descent, although it seems unlikely given her relatively pale skin. What isn't in question is her obsession with the dark elves; she's decorated her entire manor with drow-themed works of art. Anwyn has yet to select a husband, despite the near-constant flow of suitors that visit her home; rumor holds that she may be involved with someone already, but the scandalous nature of their love has, to this point, prevented a public announcement.

F6: Seeker Lodge

Most visitors to Sasserine pass by this unassuming building without giving it a second glance, but to those who recognize the eight-pointed star symbol carved into the front door, the Seeker Lodge is perhaps the most reliable source of adventurous expeditions in the city. The Seeker Lodge is maintained by a soft-spoken man named **Feldus Selvant** (N male human rogue 4/wizard 5/arcane trickster 3). Feldus was recently involved in a major expedition to the Forbidden City, where he and several other Seekers contested with a group of adventurers from Cauldron over claims of a set of golden rings liberated from a yuan-ti temple.

F7: Alchemist's Guildhall

This large building is staffed by a small army of researchers and apprentices beholden to a fussy gnome named **Blisker Tittertop** (NE male gnome wizard 3/cleric 3/mystic theurge 8). Blisker has little interest in either Wee Jas or the Witchwardens, which has earned him the scorn of most of Sasserine's arcanists.

F8: Vanderboren Manor

Traditionally, the Vanderborens have been taken with high-risk ventures, and as a result many of their resources are taken up by sudden unexpected expenditures, leaving little to further their position in the city itself. Recently, young **Lavinia Vanderboren** (NG female human aristocrat 2) became the estate's sole heir after her parents perished in a terrible ship fire and her brother Vanthus went missing.

F9: Telvanta Academy

This prestigious dance school has a secret; its matron, a shrill but talented woman named **Alma Telvanta** (LE female human battle dancer 10; the battle dancer class is detailed in the *Dragon Compendium*), is in fact an agent of the Scarlet Brotherhood. Those she accepts as students are also those she deems can be molded in

secret into good citizens and members of the Brotherhood; their training in the academy is as much in espionage as it is in dance.

W1: Witchwarden Tower

Established nearly 600 years ago by the church of Wee Jas, the Witchwardens have since become a secular mage's guild. The current mistress of the guild is High Warden **Lux Seoni** (LN female human wizard 11).

W2: High Market

The High Market is where the truly exotic or expensive merchants come to hawk their wares to the city's elite.

W3: Meravanchi Manor

Whispers of the extremes to which the Meravanchis have gone in their notorious parties have always given the taverns of Sasserine something to talk about. Lord **Zebula Meravanchi** (CN male human aristocrat 8) is no different; recently, rumors that Zebula captured a nymph that he keeps in a secret suite of rooms in the basement of his manor have members of the old faith and the Knowlern family up in arms.

W4: Sasserine Opera House

Often featuring dancers trained in the Telvanta Academy and entertainers from as far away as Greyhawk City, events at the Sasserine Opera House rarely pass by without making a huge scene. The Opera House is run by **Nylaria Absalee** (NG female human aristocrat 4/bard 5), a large woman whose girth is matched by her flair for extravagant hairstyles and dresses.

W5: House of the Dragon

This large square building serves a dual purpose; it's both a library and a school. The school itself is dedicated to the education of anyone who can afford its prohibitive tuition, and its curriculum is certainly outstanding, as those who have graduated have become exceptional members of their chosen fields. Underground chambers house dormitories and the extensive library. Built over the entrance to Zelkarune's lair, the notorious black dragon's visage adorns the school's façade, as well as its banners and interior décor.

W6: Lidu Manor

Sasserine's oldest family, the Lidus were also the family to suffer the most under the Sea Prince rule. This period has taught the Lidu family humility, and it was primarily at their urging that Sasserine's new government was composed of the people rather than

of one ruling family. The current patriarch is **Worrin Lidu** (NG male human aristocrat 5/wizard 7), a kind-hearted noble who hopes to heal the rift between the churches of Kord and Wee Jas.

W7: Cartographer's Guildhall

The Cartographer's Guildhall is funded, in part, by the Azure Cathedral and the Seekers, yet they leave the administration of the guild largely in the hands of its more-than-competent mistress, **Kiva Willowtop** (NG female halfling expert 8).

W8: Temple of Wee Jas

The great domed hall of this temple houses a sixty-foot-tall statue of Wee Jas. Dozens of acolytes tend the temple and aid the aging **Mother Annah Teranaki** (LG female human cleric 13) in all matters. The temple has recently come under scrutiny, after one of Annah's own protégés, Embril Aloustinai, used the Cauldron Cathedral of Wee Jas as a cover for her own nefarious purposes.

W9: Ancestor Island

The dead of Sasserine who are not cremated are interred in above-ground domed vaults here on Ancestor Island, since the surrounding ground is generally too swampy to support proper graveyards. At the center of the island rises the Scarlet Spire, the gravestone that marks the only exception to this rule. Here is where Sasserine herself lies, the fifty-foot-tall crystalline spire above her tomb one of the city's most beloved landmarks.

O1: Shrine of St. Worgul

St. Worgul was said to be the ugliest dwarf to ever live in Sasserine. That she was still able to build a small empire of taverns and merchant companies and become one of the city's richest entrepreneurs speaks volumes for her ability to rise above her hideous countenance. The stories hold that before she died, she willed her estate and holdings to the district of Shadowshore that they might have a safe public place to gather, and that the keeper of her estate would represent the district's interests to the other six of the city.

Of course, the entire tale of St. Worgul is a clever fabrication by the church of Olidammara to generate a safe, public place for the faithful to gather and as a front for their true activities in Sasserine. The current priest of the Shrine of St. Worgul is a stooped and rather ugly-looking man named **Jalpe Jinn** (CN male half-orc rogue 3/cleric 8).

O2: Dracktus Manor

A classic example of leadership borne out of the combination of money and murder, this estate is currently run by an overbearing man named **Emil Dracktus** (NE male human aristocrat 3/rogue 4), after he "liberated" rule of the estate from its previous owners a few nights after the Sea Princes were driven from town. Emil Dracktus' real name is known only to him; he certainly bears no relation to the last five families who ruled this estate.

O3: Amedio Trading Concern

While Sasserine features many importers and exporters, none have become as successful as the Amedio Trading Concern. Detractors claim this is because the owners willfully take part in smuggling and the black market, but none have the resources (or bravery) to confront the towering presence that is the Trading Concern's lord and master. **Vico Bevenin** (CN male human ranger 5/expert 4) claims to have ogre blood in his veins, something his 6-foot-7-inch frame supports with ease. He owns no less than seven large trading vessels, each staffed by a crew of ex-pirates and thugs that are more than capable of holding their own, and owes much of his success to the immense rum distillery that takes up half of this building.

O4: Shipwright's Guildhall

Not everyone in Sasserine can afford to hire their own carpenters to build ships. For everyone else, the Shipwright's Guildhall is often the only choice. Despite its location, this guild is known to produce functional ships at affordable prices. Guildmaster **Gregar Skeen** (N male human expert 6/fighter 1) has managed to keep the business his own in the same way his fathers before him managed; by paying a lot of protection money to local thugs and by giving deep discounts to any citizen of Shadowshore who seeks to purchase a boat.

P1: Thunder River Lumber

Owned by the Taskerhill family, this lumberyard processes all of the exotic wood that comes through Sasserine. Trees logged from the Amedio Jungle are sent down the Thunder River, tended by foolhardy but brave "logriders" armed with long hooked poles until they arrive at the shallow bay surrounding this location. These logs are pulled from the waters, dried, cut, and then exported on barges to the north, where the lumber is loaded onto visiting trade vessels.

P2: Historian's Guild

This unassuming-looking building came into being many centuries ago, when a group of like-minded scholars realized that someone needed to document the city's history. Someone not tied to one of the noble families, someone capable of preserving records of all of the city's events in a safe place. That this cabal of scholars happens to secretly worship Vecna, and that their goal is to catalogue all of Sasserine's secrets for the purposes of honoring their god and making money via blackmail, is a truth known only to a few frightened souls. The current leader of this cult is a tall, thin man named **Errix Vorn** (NE male human cleric 7).

P3: Landowner's Hall

When the dozens of plantation owners need to gather, they do so at this large building. The manor features numerous guest rooms and a large meeting hall; when no guests or meetings are present, the hall is watched over by a staff of maids and servants led by a quiet man named **Basar Finn** (NG male human expert 3).

P4: Dawn Market

Dawn Market operates during daylight hours only, and is the primary source for food, firewood, and other necessities to the citizens of Sunrise.

P5: Knowlern Manor

Three hundred years ago, **Aniphastus Knowlern** (NG male elf aristocrat 3/wizard 7) and his family ran aground only a few miles west of Sasserine after their ship was attacked by pirates. Aniphastus took the event as an omen, and upon reaching the city of Sasserine they settled on its outskirts. In time, the city overtook their estate, but the Knowlerns made sure that at least a small portion of the land's original beauty remained untouched in the nearby Standing Stone Park.

P6: Dawnhouse

The Dawnhouse is a modest chapel dedicated to Pelor. A dozen priests tend the church, led by a dynamic and outgoing woman named **Kera Gosalar** (LG female human paladin 3/cleric 4). Kera finds much of the "anarchy" of the city to be distasteful, but rather than leading a crusade against the city's vices, she has chosen to provide an alternative option for the citizens. Her priests are often seen wandering the streets of the city, offering shelter and aid to those who look like they need a helping hand and turning the other cheek when confronted with sin.

P7: Standing Stone Park

A bastion of nature within the city walls, this region features well-maintained paths for anyone who wishes a safe place to meditate and relax in the jungle's bosom. The park is maintained by the Knowlern family.

Requiem of the Shadow Serpent

BY ANSON CARALYA
BY STEVE ELLIS
BY ROB LAZZARETTI

FORGOTTEN REALMS, MID LEVEL (6TH–12TH), DUNGEON CRAWL

Shar's newest convert lurks in the dark heart of a dead cavern, composing a requiem for brave heroes. Her first stanza is a tale of betrayal, of trusted servants turned against their masters, while her second laments the emptiness of abandonment by a constant companion. Can the PCs counter with a bright refrain, or will they succumb to the shadow serpent's song?

"Requiem of the Shadow Serpent" is a FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for a party of four 9th-level characters. While the adventure is set in the Western Heartlands region, the majority of it takes place in a remote cavern, so it can be easily placed in any temperate wilderness region near a frontier town.

Adventure Background

In Renkilk's Cranny shall you atone
Where the shadow reigns unchecked
The hunting moonbeams' powers gone
The chase moonlight will regret.

Eshayben, priestess of Shar and schemer in Skullport, received this cryptic directive from her superior following the destruction of her cell of Shar worshippers. Chagrined at her losses and eager to re-establish her place among Shar's faithful, Eshayben learned that "Renkilk's Cranny" referred to a cavern complex in the southern Trielta Hills. She immediately journeyed there, overpowered the resident ogres, and discovered the reason she had been sent there: a dead magic zone filled one cavern in the cave complex, making it a perfect trap for Shadow Weave users against Weave spellcasters. She set to work honing the trap, dreaming of the followers of Selûne who would soon meet their end by her hand.

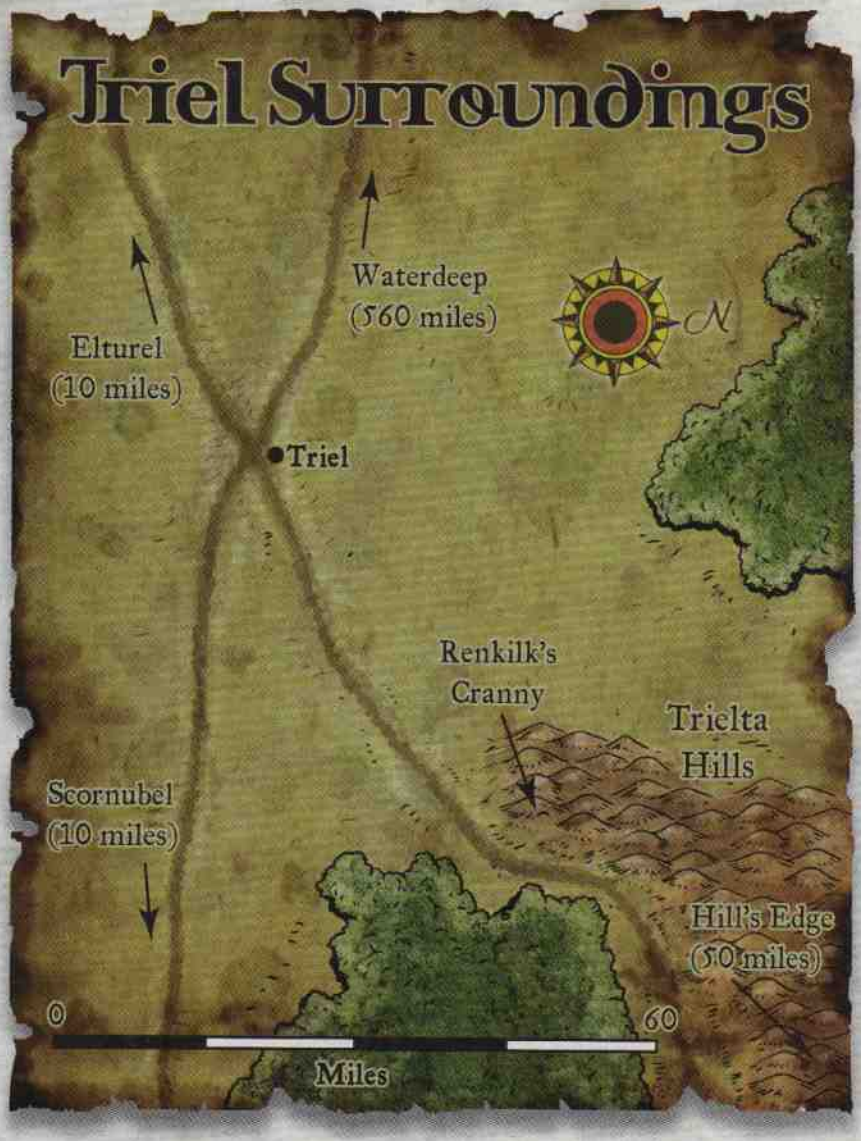
Despite Eshayben's precautions, her activities were detected. The Red Wizard enclave in nearby Hill's Edge pays well for local rumors, and when two of their itinerant evokers heard about the activity in the deserted caverns, they chose to investigate. They caught Eshayben by surprise and fought her outside of her dead magic sanctum. As she fell, she uttered a final curse upon the intruders. Shar heard this imprecation and chose to fulfill it, hoping to maintain the secret of the dead magic zone. Eshayben rose immediately as a ghost and destroyed

The Weave and the Shadow Weave

When a creature uses magic anywhere within the world of Toril, it channels raw magic through a conduit known as the Weave. Mystra, the goddess of magic, controls this conduit and it is within her power to deny any individual access to the Weave. Contrary to the experience of most spellcasters, the Weave is neither omnipresent nor impervious: the concentration of tremendous magical energies can disrupt it, and in some places known as dead magic zones, the Weave disappears completely. A dead magic zone functions as an *antimagic field*. In addition, it is impossible to employ divination magic on anything in a dead magic zone, and it is also impossible to use teleportation effects to move into or out of the zone. Weave users, whether they are spellcasters or creatures with spell-like or supernatural abilities, immediately notice when they enter a dead magic zone.

Those who wish to use magic without bowing to Mystra have one alternative: the Shadow Weave. Created by the goddess Shar as a tool in her eternal battle with her sister Selûne, the Shadow Weave functions much like the Weave, with the exception that Shar, rather than Mystra, controls it. Shadow Weave users can produce stronger enchantment, illusion, and necromancy effects than Weave users, but their evocation and transmutation effects are weaker, and they cannot produce light effects at all. Shadow Weave users are both unaware of and unaffected by a dead magic zone, as they do not access the Weave.

The Weave, dead magic zones, and the Shadow Weave are described in greater detail in the FORGOTTEN REALMS *Campaign Setting*.



the Red Wizards, whose resources had been largely spent in defeating her the first time.

In Faerûn, those watching are often watched in turn, and such was the case with these Red Wizards. The yuan-ti of the Coiled Cabal, a secret society of serpentfolk based in Ss'kowlyn'raa in the Forest of Wyrms, had been keeping an eye on the local Red Wizards to make sure they didn't stumble upon the snakes' secrets. When the evokers did not exit the caverns, it was the yuan-ti's turn to investigate. Their expedition, led by the bard Sseselheve, survived their encounter with Eshayben's ghost. Sseselheve recognized that this ghost could be used to harvest magical gear from adventurers, and a garrison was soon established with her superiors' blessing. Unbeknownst to those superiors, Sseselheve had also discovered the dead magic zone, and secretly turned to Shar and her Shadow Weave, claiming the dead magic zone as her sanctum sanctorum. (The Mulhorandi god Set has bound the yuan-ti deity Sseth and has subverted his worship among the serpentfolk. Some yuan-ti, including Sseselheve, have sensed this change, making them more open to adopting new gods such as Shar.)

Once her trap was set, Sseselheve disguised herself as an innocent traveler with the aid of *alter self*, and spread stories in the nearby town of Triel about the ferocious trolls that ravaged her caravan. It wasn't long before a local party of adventurers took the bait and went off to investigate the cave. Expecting to fight brutish trolls, the group fell right into the trap set by the cunning snakes. Now, with "trolls" on the loose and the local adventurers cut down, Triel needs more heroes. Meanwhile, in Renkilk's Cranny, the yuan-ti sit back and wait for the next group of victims to enter their den.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs arrive in the town of Triel and learn of Renkilk's Cranny, a nearby cavern complex rumored to be the new lair of a band of trolls. Triel's Striding Sheriff asks the PCs to investigate the rumors, and destroy the threat to her village. Instead of trolls, the PCs run into a trap set by the yuan-ti. The first few cavern encounters feature obstacles and expendable guardians to test the mettle of any intruders, under the observation of yuan-ti in their "slither tunnels." The caves eventually lead to a confrontation with Eshayben. If the PCs survive this confrontation, the yuan-ti order their servants to fight to the end while they gradually fall back. Sseselheve, the yuan-ti bard commander of the operation, ultimately confronts the PCs in a dead magic zone, where the PCs must defeat a spellcaster without the aid of any of their own spells.

Adventure Hooks

"Requiem of the Shadow Serpent" begins when the PCs arrive in Triel and learn of the caravan attacks. Here are two ways to get the PCs interested in Renkilk's Cranny:

- The PCs uncover a yellowed copy of Eshayben's directive (detailed in the Adventure Background) among other correspondence that links the note to followers of Shar. The search for additional clues leads them to Renkilk's Cranny.
- Someone in Triel contacts the PCs and requests their aid. The request could come from Tarsen Harb, who's concerned with the fate of the missing adventuring party; Antriera, after she catches a glimpse of conspiracy in recent Triel happenings; or Ydan Arvest, anxious at the prospect of increased attacks on his caravans. These NPCs may be related to the PCs, former employers, family friends, or they may only be familiar with the PCs by reputation.

TRIEL

The stockaded village of Triel stands astride the Trade Way. Crates, barrels, bins, and jugs of preserved vegetables and grain are stacked high and deep among simple wooden buildings. Triel has no inns, taverns, or decent stores, and visitors are expected to camp outside the walls and help defend against bugbear raids. Common is spoken loudly, Chondathan in conversational tones, and other tongues in whispers.

The ruler of Triel is Elvar the Grainlord, an eccentric man obsessed with having enough food to survive the winter when the weather halts trading traffic along the roads. Elvar changes religions almost every tenday, but his foibles are tolerated by the villagers due to his genius for finding water, creating proper irrigation, and anticipating weather and crop problems. Altar building and dismantling at the Cup of Plenty (Elvar's shrine) is a regular pastime, as is the arrival of new vestments and hired priests.

Caravan trade is the center of life in most towns and villages in the Western Heartlands, and Triel is no exception. While the heavy traffic of the Waterdeep-Scornubel route provides the majority of the town's commerce, traders wary of the eager justice of Elturel to the south often undertake the short detour to Triel. The villagers are frontier folk, talented in the physical skills supporting survival and diplomatic in trading for what they need, but with little patience for the abstract or subtle. Agreeable adventurers are welcomed as potential allies in commerce or protection, and only those who invite suspicion receive it. Less trusting are the "factors," caravan agents who dwell within Triel, but they spare little time for anything outside their trade. None in Triel are aware of the forces currently working against them.

The Western Heartlands can be dangerous, and straying from the road often invites ruin, but few know that danger comes from the influence of Najara, Kingdom of Snakes (*Serpent Kingdoms* 104). This hidden realm of nagas, yuan-ti, and their servants has kept the Western Heartlands divided for decades, manipulating the development of their future slave-states, biding their time before striking the deciding blow. Many residents of Serpent's Cowl (a village in the shadow of the Forest of Wyrms) have already been converted into tainted ones. In Triel, the Coiled Cabal aims to bleed off the strongest potential opposition and amass valuable resources with their clever trap in Renkilk's Cranny. These two initiatives may be independent experiments, or may be pieces of some larger strategic plan—only the snakes know for certain.

Village Stats

Triel (village): Conventional; AL N; 800 gp limit; Assets 30,800 gp; Population 770; Mixed (79% humans, 9% halfling, 7% gnome, 4% dwarf, 1% others).

Authority Figures: **Elvar the Grainlord**, LN male Chondathan human warrior 3/expert 4 (Lord of Triel), **Tarsen Harb**, NG female Tethyrian human ranger 3 (Mielikki) (Striding Sheriff).

Important Characters: **Antriera**, NG female Tethyrian human cleric 5 (Chauntea), **Quarly Beylters**, LE female Chondathan human rogue 4/expert 3 (jeweler, Zhent spy), **Sordem Sing**, NG male rock gnome illusionist 4 (technician), **Ydan Arvest**, N male human expert 5 (foremost caravan factor).

Notes: Triel's constant caravan trade gives it a gp limit above the normal value for a village.

Triel Inquiries

Use the information below to answer any questions the PCs have regarding Renkilk's Cranny or recent events in Triel. This information can be gained with Gather Information, Knowledge (local), or bardic knowledge checks made at the listed DCs.

Recent Events

DC 10: The town buzzes with the news of a band of trolls that are attacking caravans along the road between Triel and Hill's Edge. Several of the caravans are taking on extra guards or planning alternate routes.

DC 15: Tarsen Harb, the town's young Striding Sheriff, is concerned that the trolls may represent a larger threat to the town. Any disruption in the caravan trade is dire news in a town like Triel. Unable to leave town due

to other commitments (and being no match herself for a group of rampaging trolls), she is quietly looking for adventurers to tackle the situation.

DC 20: The troll rumors started when Hevessel, a mesmerizing wisp of a woman who spoke Chondathan, arrived in town two weeks ago looking for Tarsen. Later that evening, she told the patrons of a local public house a terrifying story of a troll attack on her caravan. (This was Sseselheve, using *alter self* to transform into a pureblood, and then disguising herself to pass as a human.)

DC 25: Shaylef, a reserved, prematurely gray-haired woman, hired six local mercenaries as guards to accompany her to Waterdeep last summer. Their families have not heard from them since, and consider them lost. (Eshayben hired the locals to help clear the caverns, then secured her secret by eliminating them.)

Renkilk's Cranny

DC 5: The name refers to a series of caverns in the Trielta Hills recently claimed by a troll chieftain and his followers. (This rumor began with Sseselheve posing as Hevessel, but has taken on a life of its own.)

DC 10: Clear directions to the caverns.

DC 15: The caverns are named for Renkilk, the spoiled son of an aristocrat who hid in the caverns for two days after stealing from the Cup of Plenty. No outdoorsman, his capture by a Helmite paladin (invited to Triel on Elvar's whim) saved him from making a meal of his boots.

DC 20: A group of four adventurers learned of the troll infestation and set off for Renkilk's Cranny several days ago. They have not been heard from since.

RENKILK'S CRANNY

Most of the journey from Triel to Renkilk's Cranny in the Trielta Hills can be accomplished by following the trade-road northeast toward Hill's Edge and then breaking off north to the caverns (see the Triel Surroundings map). The PCs pass caravans on the road, but nothing dangerous. If they choose to trek through the wilderness to reach the caverns or spend time camped away from the road, use the random wilderness encounters for temperate forests and hills in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (pages 96–97). When the PCs reach the obvious entrance to the caverns, read or paraphrase the following:

> Hidden among the shadows of a steep, rocky hillside is a darker hollow, an opening a dozen feet wide that tapers to an equal height. The granite walls of the cave mouth glisten, the damp floor is littered with gravel, and insects and dripping water can be heard within. A rough tunnel descends from the surface into darkness.

A DC 22 Survival check made here by a character with Track reveals tracks of large serpents, but no troll tracks.

A second entrance to the caverns is hidden in the underbrush fifty feet to the west. A DC 20 Search check uncovers the nearly vertical shaft. This passage is used by the deathcoils (area 2) and leads to its lair. A DC 20 Track check at the shaft's opening reveals the passage of a very large arboreal serpent.

There are three types of caverns within the complex: natural caverns, slither tunnels (narrow passages used by the yuan-ti to observe and move about unseen), and the yuan-ti chambers (always worked to a remarkable smoothness, with the lone exception of area **15**, Sseselheve's lair). The caverns are humid and warm, with both qualities increasing with proximity to the chasm (area **14**). There is no natural or artificial light within the caverns—the inhabitants all have darkvision, making it that much easier to detect intruders.

Creatures: PCs who elect to set an ambush at the cave's mouth may be in for a surprise: the deathcoils emerges from its hole to hunt 24 hours after the PCs arrive, gliding through the trees to attack nearby prey. The Fangs of Sseth in areas **9** and **14** cautiously leave the caverns once every 4 days to hunt (they would prefer to hunt less frequently, but their minions are ravenous).

1. Slime Trap (EL 8)

Trap: Thohsvohs (area **13**) crafted a mechanical trap here that drops green slime (*Dungeon Master's Guide* 76) on intruders that explore this dead-end passageway. Any weight on the tunnel floor greater than 10 pounds triggers the trap, and everything in the section of tunnel noted on the map is exposed to the falling slime. Hidden bypass switches are located on both sides of the trap. Once triggered, the trap can be recognized for what it is (Search DC 20) rather than a natural fall of slime, and a DC 25 Disable Device check reveals how the trap is re-filled.

Green Slime Trap: CR 8; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; hidden switch (Search DC 25) bypass; Atk +10 melee touch; multiple targets (all targets in affected area); green slime; Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

2. Snake Den (EL 9)

Shallow pools, constantly rippling from the impact of endless water droplets, cover the floor of this cavern. A passage twists away to the south, and a dry, flat ledge is visible seven feet up the eastern wall.

The ledge connects to a steep and obstructed passage leading to the surface, used by the deathcoils for hunting forays into the outside world. A concealed passage (Search DC 30) low on the northwest wall allows access to the yuan-ti's "slither tunnels," but the tunnel is only 1 foot wide and tall at the entrance. (Yuan-ti can assume the form of snakes as small as Tiny size, allowing them to easily pass through the tunnels.)

Creatures: The yuan-ti positioned guardians here to test the mettle of intruders. On the ledge lurks a deathcoils, a vicious green and jet serpent, notorious for its crushing coils and soporific breath weapon. Six thick-bodied, aggressive rattlesnakes nest in the north end of the cavern. A flying fang, a fiendish green-grey serpent with bat-like wings, is hidden among the rattlers (DC 25 Spot check to distinguish the flying fang from the vipers, unless it takes flight).

DEATHCOILS CR 7
CE Huge magical beast
Serpent Kingdoms 63
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +12, Spot +12
Language Yuan-Ti (cannot speak)
AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 12
hp 74 (11 HD)
Fort +8 **Ref** +10 **Will** +4
Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Melee bite +16 (2d6+10)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +11; **Grp** +26
Atk Options constrict (1d8+10), improved grab
Special Actions poison breath
Abilities Str 25, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 2
Feats Ability Focus (poison breath), Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Natural Attack (bite)
Skills Balance +17, Climb +17, Hide +7, Listen +12, Spot +12, Swim +17
Poison Breath (Ex) Twice per day, a deathcoils can breathe a 60-foot cone of poisonous gas (inhaled, Fortitude DC 18, initial damage sleep for 2d4 hours or until damage is taken, secondary damage 1d6 Con).

FLYING FANG CR 4
Advanced elite fiendish flying snake
NE Medium magical beast (extraplanar)
Races of Faerûn 177, *Monster Manual* 107
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +7, Spot +10
Languages Yuan-Ti
AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 13
hp 34 (4 HD); **DR** 5/magic
Resist cold 5, fire 5; **SR** 9
Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +1
Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 20 ft. (average)
Melee bite +9 (1d4+1 plus 1 acid)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +5
Atk Options Flyby Attack, constrict (1d4+1), improved grab, smite good 1/day (+4 damage)
Special Actions acid spit (+9 ranged touch)
Abilities Str 12, Dex 20, Con 15, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 2
Feats Alertness, Flyby Attack, Weapon Finesse
Skills Balance +13, Climb +14, Hide +9, Listen +10, Spot +7
Acid Spit (Ex) Once per round, a Flying Fang can spit acid as a ranged touch attack. The acid spit deals 1 point of acid damage but is insufficient to count as a grenadelike weapon. A Flying Fang that bites an opponent automatically deals an additional 1 point of damage from acid.

Rattlesnakes (6): hp 9 each; *Monster Manual* 280 (Medium viper).

Tactics: The deathcoils immediately attacks intruders, targeting its breath weapon so as not to hit the other snakes. If it has trouble hitting opponents, it bull rushes them toward the rattlers to provoke attacks of opportunity. The rattlers sound their warning and strike any intruder within reach. Once combat begins, the flying fang retreats through the passage to the southwest, whereupon it alerts the yuan-ti in area **5**. Its flight through area **3** does not trigger the trap there.

3. Slime Trap (EL 8)

This trap is identical to the trap in area **1**. Eshayben blocked the passage to the east to limit movement within the caverns.

4. False Troll Den (EL 7)

Bones, broken weapons and armor, carrion, and coins are scattered across the floor of

this cavern. A few charred logs indicate a fire was attempted in an alcove to the southwest, with little success in this dank place.

The yuan-ti use this cavern to give an appearance of truth to the troll rumors. The two well-hidden (Search DC 30), large secret doors in the north serve to populate the cavern with trolls from area 5 when intruders are expected. In addition to the secret doors, a spy-hole is set on the southern portion of the west wall for the occupants of area 5. The hole is 10 feet above the cavern floor and cleverly disguised (Search DC 30, or DC 20 if a character is Large or flying). A DC 14 Survival check reveals that there are no troll tracks into or out of this cave, and that there are far too few signs of habitation for the trolls to dwell in this cavern.

Creatures: If the yuan-ti abominations in area 5 have been alerted to intruders, their two troll prisoners are encountered here. The trolls, natives of the Trollclaws who migrated to the Trielta Hills before their capture, are kept hungry and attack intruders on sight. A few demonstrations of *baleful polymorph* have banished any thought of treachery from the trolls' dull minds.

Trolls (2): hp 63; *Monster Manual* 247.

Treasure: The yuan-ti planted 179 sp, 123 gp, and 36 pp here as troll loot. There is nothing else of value.

Development: The abominations in area 5 observe events here if they have been warned of intruders. If the PCs defeat the trolls, one abomination assumes snake form and heads down the "slither tunnel" towards area 6 to close the trapdoor at the entrance to area 6 behind the PCs, locking them in with Eshayben.

5. Observation and Holding Pen (EL 9)

This chamber of worked, polished stone stands in sharp contrast to the natural caverns nearby. Cylindrical tunnels, dwindling to very low, narrow passages, lead into and away from three overlapping hemispherical chambers, with two of the chambers ringed by stout iron bars to form enclosures. A ramp spirals up to a ledge and small stone door along the eastern wall, and a pool of oily liquid occupies an alcove to the west. Jarring, labyrinthine patterns jump off canvasses set on two easels facing the cells.

This is the central chamber of the yuan-ti "slither tunnel" network, from which intruders are observed. The cells are closed with good locks (Open Lock DC 30) and the bars are extremely stout (Strength check DC 30 to bend). The secret door exits from the cells to area 4 are obvious from this side, and are controlled by small levers set in the eastern wall. When alerted to the presence of intruders, the abominations activate their repulsion power and open the secret doors to drive the trolls into area 4. If the PCs arrive in this area before the abominations have released the trolls, the cells are occupied; otherwise they are empty.

Creatures: A pair of yuan-ti abominations oversees the holding pens here. The abominations were initially offended by their menial role in this operation, then became bored, and now plot to spoil Sseselheve's plans. If the PCs catch the yuan-ti unaware, then the trolls are still here, resting in their holding pens.

Orhosvis and Oolhihlisu, Male Yuan-Ti Abominations: hp 67 each; *Monster Manual* 264.

Trolls (2): hp 63; *Monster Manual* 247.

Tactics: If attacked here, the abominations fight until either is reduced to 30 hp. At this point, they both retreat by the easiest route available, either further into or out of the caverns.

The trolls are perfectly capable of reaching through the bars to attack anyone within 10 feet of the cells; they do not attack yuan-ti for fear of the scaled ones' *baleful polymorph*.

Treasure: The abominations have been creating paintings of snakes eating trolls collaboratively yet competitively to pass the time, and enjoy tormenting the trolls with them. Patterns lie within and across patterns, and simpler creatures can spend hours searching for the significance. Four of the canvases are quite amazing, and are each worth 2,000 gp.

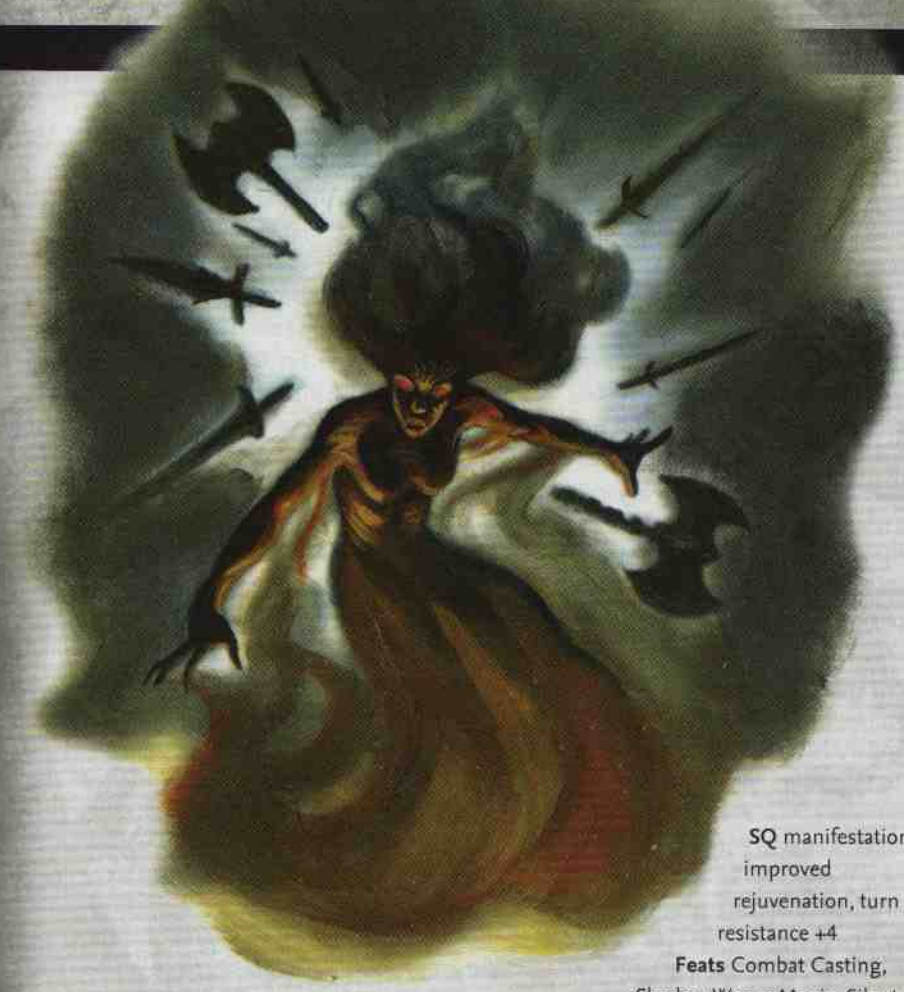
6. Eshayben's Haunt (EL 10)

Streaks of violet, perhaps the result of trace amounts of amethyst suspended in quartz, slash across the walls of this broad cavern, while an unbroken band of violet encircles the ceiling. The usual flecks of mica are absent within this dark circle. A passage leads to the northeast and a foul, musky odor permeates the place.

A stone door, controlled by a lever in the "slither tunnel" from area 5, is concealed above the entrance to the cavern (Spot DC 25). Lifting the door requires a DC 20 Strength check. The secret door from area 5 is well-hidden (Search DC 30).

Creature: This is the haunt of Eshayben, who has remained here since the destruction of the Red Wizards. Although Shar granted Eshayben's last request and transformed her into a ghost, she was not pleased with her priest's failure, and as a result Eshayben is both less and more than her former self. Shar filled Eshayben with an overwhelming urge to possess and control magic items. This urge is so powerful that Eshayben thinks about nothing else, a fact that is reflected in her reduced mental statistics. She is completely oblivious to creatures and nonmagical items, but any magic item brought into this room drives her into a frenzy as she seeks to wrench it away from its possessor with her telekinetic aura. The yuan-ti learned of her obsession shortly after they arrived in the cave, and now use her to destroy invaders. As long as they refrain from carrying magical gear into this cave, she tolerates their presence. On those occasions when the yuan-ti need to pass through here with magic items (or harvest any that Eshayben has taken from adventurers), Thohsvohs (see area 13) stands outside the radius of her telekinetic aura and blasts her down with repeated castings of *magic missile*, knowing that she'll rejuvenate soon enough.

When she manifests, she appears in the center of the cavern as a frenetic woman with ash-colored hair and matching robe. Upon spotting intruders, she laughs as



if through several throats and then endlessly repeats her mantra:

"I move not,
I need not;
What comes here
Moves for me."

ESHAYBEN CR 8

Female Illuskan human ghost cleric 8 (Shar)
NE Medium undead (augmented humanoid, incorporeal)
Monster Manual 117
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +4, Listen +4
Aura telekinetic aura (30-ft. radius)

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 14
hp 52 (8 HD)
Immune incorporeal traits, undead traits
Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +9

Spd 0 ft.
Melee incorporeal touch +7/+2 (1d4 ability drain)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** —
Special Actions rebuke undead 7/day (+6, 2d6+14)
Note: Eshayben is incapable of casting spells due to her reduced Wisdom score.

Abilities Str —, Dex 12, Con —, Int 2, Wis 4, Cha 18
SQ manifestation, improved rejuvenation, turn resistance +4
Feats Combat Casting, Shadow Weave Magic, Silent Spell, Stealthy
Skills Concentration +11, Diplomacy +10, Heal +1, Hide +11, Knowledge (religion) +1, Listen +4, Move Silently +3, Search +4, Spellcraft +2, Spot +4, Use Magic Device +12

Improved Rejuvination (Su) Eshayben rejuvenates 24 hours after being destroyed, unless magical light shines within area **15**.

Telekinetic Aura (Su) This is a variation on the standard *telekinesis* power possessed by some ghosts. This magical aura animates any loose, unattended object that weighs less than 20 pounds and swirls it around the ghost at high speed. If there are at least 10 pounds of available debris, the aura creates a vortex of fast-moving objects with a radius of 30 feet around the ghost. The vortex automatically does 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage to each creature in the area of effect at the beginning of Eshayben's turn. In addition to this effect, the aura has an affinity for magic items. Any magic item in the area that is not secured (weapons, hats, goggles, etc.) is automatically pulled into the debris field unless its wielder makes a DC 18 Reflex save at the beginning of his turn. A character can forgo making this save if he spends a full-round action doing nothing but hanging onto his gear. Once the aura has captured an item, it cannot be recovered until Eshayben is destroyed or ceases her manifestation.

Tactics: As she states, Eshayben cannot move, although her aura is likely to pose a serious problem for any intruders. There is enough loose debris in the room for Eshayben to use her telekinetic aura to its full effect, in addition to any possible items she might pull out of the PCs' hands. She is also quite happy to make draining touch attacks against anyone foolish enough to come within her reach, draining Dexterity first in the hope of improving her chances of successive hits and eventually paralyzing opponents. If Eshayben is turned, she ends her manifestation. When her animation power ends or she is brought to o hp, she whispers the command she was given by her Sharran cell leader (see the beginning of "Adventure Background"), and fades away.

Development: If the yuan-ti abominations from area **5** are aware of the characters, one closes the concealed door into area **6** once the PCs are in the cavern, then remains hidden unless the PCs gain entry to area **8**, at which time it attacks. The trens in area **7** stand just ouside the range of Eshayben's aura and try to keep the PCs inside its area of effect, while peppering them with javelins and green slime (see below). If the PCs close to within melee range, they rage and pull out their greatswords.

Her curtailed intellect prevents her from learning from experience, so her tactics do not improve if the party confronts her repeatedly.

7. Slime Farm (EL 8)

This cavern seethes with a horrible stench. There are clear signs of humanoid habitation, with reed mats on the floor, weapons and large stone tools propped against walls, and jugs and utensils resting on ledges. A bowl-shaped depression five feet across has

been worked into the floor to the east, and a stone bowl sits by the pool's edge.

Green slime grows within the pool. The current batch is equal to 5 individual slimes, and can be grown at a rate as fast as one slime per day if fed generously. The stone tools are used to transport the slime to re-load the cavern traps (areas **1** and **3**).

The tools and utensils are worthless, beyond allowing safe transportation of green slime, and the jugs contain water.

The secret door to the south is well-hidden (Search DC 30) and very heavy (DC 20 Strength check to open), but the tracks made daily by the trens passing through it (Survival DC 19) may give it away.

Creatures: Ages ago, one of the yuan-ti's most successful breeding programs crossed lizardfolk with troglodytes to produce the vicious, fearless trens. They resemble massively muscled lizardfolk and favor large melee weapons. Three trens are stationed here, under orders to attack anything that causes Eshayben (area **6**) to manifest, and also care for the green slime.

TREN RAGER (3) CR 5
Male tren barbarian 2
CE Medium humanoid (aquatic, reptilian)
Serpent Kingdoms 87
Init +6; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +5
Languages Common

AC 25, touch 12, flat-footed 23; uncanny dodge
hp 58 (6 HD)
Fort +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

Spd 30 ft., swim 30 ft.
Melee mwk greatsword +10 (2d6+6/19–20) and bite +7 (1d6+2) or 2 claws +9 (1d4+4) and bite +7 (1d6+2)
Ranged mwk javelin +8 (1d6+4)
Base Atk +5; Grp +9
Atk Options Power Attack
Special Actions rage 1/day, stench (Fort DC 16)

Abilities Str 18, Dex 15, Con 19, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8
SQ amphibious, illiteracy
Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack
Skills Hide +11, Listen +4, Spot +5, Swim +8
Possessions masterwork breastplate, masterwork greatsword, masterwork javelins (5)

Stench (Ex) When a tren is angry or frightened, it secretes an oily, musklike chemical that nearly every form of animal life finds offensive. Every living creature (except other trens and troglodytes) within 30 feet of a tren must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or be sickened for 10 rounds. A creature subjected to stench from multiple trens makes only one saving throw. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same tren's stench for 24 hours. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect. Creatures immune to poison are unaffected, and a creature resistant to poison receives its normal bonus on the saving throw.

Rage (Ex) While raging, the trens' statistics change as follows:
AC 23, touch 10, flat-footed 21; uncanny dodge
hp 70 (6 HD)
Fort +13, **Will** +6
Melee* mwk greatsword +9 (2d6+15/19–20) and bite +6 (1d6+6) or 2 claws +8 (1d4+9) and bite +6 (1d6+6)
Ranged mwk javelin +8 (1d6+6)
Grp +11
*3-point Power Attack
Abilities Str 22, Con 23
Skills Swim +10

Tactics: If the trens are encountered here, or forced to retreat here from area **6**, one fills the stone pot with green slime (a full-round action) and hurls it at the nearest character (treat as an improvised thrown grenade-like weapon). If a Small character stands near the slime pool, the trens attempt to bull rush the character into the pool.

8. Guard Post (EL 9)

This natural cavern is similar to the last, with the same vile odor hanging in the air. A passage descends to the east, and a steady breeze blows up from this passage and out through a shaft in the cavern's high ceiling.

The yuan-ti allow the trens no deeper into the caverns, for while they appreciate their ferocity in combat, their stench is simply unacceptable in the yuan-ti's dwelling-spaces. The breeze through the cavern prevents the stench from making its way to the southern rooms.

Creatures: Three trens and two flying fangs are posted here. They cannot hear activity through the heavy secret door to area **7**, but are immediately alerted by its slow, grinding opening, as well as by any failed attempts to open it.

Male tren barbarian 2 (3): hp 58 each, see page 64.

Flying Fangs (2): hp 34 each, see page 61.

Tactics: The trens and one flying fang hide at the first sign of intruders, ready to ambush any who come through, while the other flying fang retreats to alert the occupants of areas **9** and **11**. The trens fight to the death, preferring this to the treatment deserters receive from their yuan-ti masters.

Treasure: There is nothing of value here beyond a neat stack of 20 masterwork javelins.

Development: The PCs' arrival in area **8** sends a cascade of alerts through the yuan-ti's caverns. Servants and lesser yuan-ti stand fast against intruders while their leaders observe and fall back, testing the PCs' strength and, in Sseselheve's case, luring them into the dead magic zone in area **15**.

9. Northern Pools (EL 9)

This cavern has been worked from floor to ceiling to a remarkable smoothness. Colors only glimpsed in the natural caverns form bright bands in the near-ceramic walls here. Pools of oily liquid have been set halfway up the north and east walls. Three fine divans occupy the center of the space, and a woven basket sits by a rough patch in the western wall.

The rough bit of western wall is a slither-rub, used by the yuan-ti to scrape off molting skin before basking in the oily pools.

Creatures: One male halfblood Fang of Sseth, a member of an order of hunters devoted to the patron deity of the yuan-ti, and two female halfblood can be found here. The male has a snake tail in place of legs and wields a masterwork composite longbow.

Ils'voh'ssesth CR 7
Male yuan-ti halfblood Fang of Sseth 2
CE Medium monstrous humanoid
Monster Manual 264, *Serpent Kingdoms* 162
Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen+15, Spot +15
Languages Abyssal, Chondathan, Common, Draconic, Yuan-Ti

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 19
hp 71 (9 HD)
SR 16
Fort +5 (+6 vs. poison), **Ref** +12, **Will** +10

Spd 20 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.
Melee mwk scimitar +12/+7 (1d6+3/18–20) and bite +6 (1d6+1 plus poison)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +14/+9 (1d8+3/x3) or
mwk composite longbow +12/+12/+7 (1d8+3/x3)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +11
Atk Options Rapid Shot, constrict (1d6+4), enhanced ranged attacks, sneak attack +1d6
Special Actions *chameleon power, detect poison, produce acid* (3d6 acid),
Combat Gear *potion of protection from arrows*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)
3/day–*animal trance* (DC 15), *cause fear* (DC 14), *entangle* (DC 14)
1/day–*deeper darkness, neutralize poison, suggestion* (DC 16)

Abilities Str 17, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 16
SQ *alternate form*, poison use
Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Snatch Arrows, Stealthy
Skills Concentration +13, Craft (bowmaking) +13, Hide +5 (+15 with *chameleon power*), Listen +15, Move Silently +15, Spot +15
Possessions combat gear, masterwork chain shirt, masterwork buckler, masterwork composite longbow (+3 Str) with 5 *+1 shock arrows* and 40 standard arrows, masterwork scimitar

Enhanced Ranged Attacks (Ex) Fangs of Sseth receive a +1 bonus on all attack rolls with ranged weapons.

Female yuan-ti halfbloods (2): hp 38; *Monster Manual* 264.

Tactics: The yuan-ti plan for the females to occupy invaders in melee while the male drinks his potion and attacks with his bow, but the male retreats to area **11** when seriously pressed.

Treasure: The basket contains yuan-ti castings, worth 200 gp to an apothecary. The divans are exquisite, worth 600 gp apiece.

10. Storage

Supplies are stored here in neat stacks, racks, and bales. Weapons and armor include 50 masterwork arrows, 100 standard arrows, a composite longbow (+2 Strength bonus), two shortbows, five scimitars, three greatswords, and a masterwork heavy steel shield. A variety of rope, excavation tools, artistic raw materials, and casks of oil are worth 500 gp in total.

11. Southern Pools (EL 12)

This cavern of glassy granite is a larger version of the one to the north, with an alcove added along the north wall and a series of small chambers worked into the southern wall. A fire-pit occupies the center of the space, flanked by an oily pool on either side. A passage bends away in the eastern corner.

The small rooms worked into the southern wall are living quarters for the halfbloods. The pool along the northern wall is filled with oily water.

Creatures: Sseselheve, the commander of this operation, typically sings to four yuan-ti halfbloods here. Her hair, eyes, clothes, and armor are dull black, but her voice shines, and it is nearly impossible to displace her arching smile.

Sseselheve CR 11
Female yuan-ti halfblood bard 9
CE Medium monstrous humanoid
Monster Manual 264
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +25, Spot +25
Languages Abyssal, Chondathan, Common, Draconic, Yuan-Ti

AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 22
hp 98 (16 HD)
SR 16
Fort +9, **Ref** +14, **Will** +15

Spd 20 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.
Melee +1 *rapier* +17/+12/+7 (1d6/18–20)
Ranged mwk shortbow +17/+12/+7 (1d6/x3)
Base Atk +13; **Grp** +14
Atk Options constrict 1d6+1
Special Actions bardic music 9/day (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire competence, inspire courage +2, inspire greatness, *suggestion* [DC 20]), *chameleon power, detect poison, produce acid* (3d6 acid)
Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*
Bard Spells Known (CL 9th [CL 8th for evocation and transmutation])
3rd (3/day)—*cure serious wounds, charm monster* (DC 21), *Verraketh's shadow crown*
2nd (4/day)—*alter self, eagle's splendor, invisibility, suggestion* (DC 19)
1st (4/day)—*cure light wounds, lesser confusion* (DC 18), *silent image* (DC 18), *summon monster I*
0 (3/day)—*detect magic, ghost sound* (DC 17), *mage hand, message, prestigitation, read magic*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)
3/day—*animal trance* (DC 19), *cause fear* (DC 17), *entangle* (DC 17)
1/day–*deeper darkness, neutralize poison, suggestion* (DC 19)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 21, Wis 18, Cha 23
SQ *alternate form*, bardic knowledge +16

Forked Tongue [Monstrous]
You speak with a honeyed voice that bends listeners to your will.
Prerequisite: Serpentfolk (e.g. couatl, naga, yuan-ti)
Benefit: Because of the enticing nature of your voice, you gain a +2 bonus on Bluff checks. Furthermore, the save DC for each of your spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural abilities that create a charm effect through verbal means increases by +1.
This feat originally appeared in *Serpent Kingdoms*.

Verraketh's Shadow Crown
Enchantment (Charm) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Brd 3
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level

Created by the legendary Shadowking of the Talfir, *Verraketh's shadow crown* cloaks the top of your head in a crown of magical shadow. For the duration of this spell, your bardic music abilities tap the Shadow Weave instead of the Weave. You receive a +4 competence bonus on Perform checks while under the effects of this spell. The effects of this spell do not stack with the Shadow Weave Magic feat.

This spell originally appeared in *Races of Faerûn*.

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Forked Tongue, Improved Initiative, Great Fortitude, Shadow Weave Magic, Skill Focus (Perform), Weapon Finesse
Skills Bluff +18, Concentration +21, Diplomacy +13, Disguise +19 (+21 acting), Gather Information +13, Knowledge (local) +15, Knowledge (history) +15, Listen +25, Perform (sing) +28, Spellcraft +20, Spot +25, Tumble +18
Possessions combat gear, *+1 light fortification studded leather*, *+1 rapier*, masterwork shortbow with 10 *+1 arrows*, *ring of counterspells* (contains *silence*), *ring of protection +1*

Female and Male Yuan-Ti Halfbloods (4): hp 38 each; *Monster Manual* 264.

Tactics: When intruders appear, Sseselheve uses her inspire courage bardic music ability on the halfbloods and then retreats, leaving the halfbloods to fight to the death.

Treasure: The small rooms contain jewelry and fine fabrics worth 5,000 gp in total, although it takes 20 minutes to find all of the valuables.

Development: Sseselheve flees to area **13** to warn Thohsvohs of any threat, then alerts her servants in area **14**, and finally falls back to the dead magic zone in area **15**.

12. Sseth's Shrine

The walls of this cavern bulge in bands winding their way up to the ceiling, giving one the impression of standing within the stacked coils of a gigantic serpent. A slender pedestal in the room's center supports a wide bowl, in which stands a jade sculpture of a snake standing on its tail.

This is a the yuan-ti shrine to Sseth, the patron deity of the yuan-ti, and the living quarters for the three Fangs of Sseth (areas **9** and **14**) dwelling in the caverns. None of the Fangs are typically encountered here, however, as they rarely rest.

Sseselheve and Thohsvohs make only enough appearances here to

Shadow Weave Magic [General]

You have discovered the dark and dangerous secrets of the Shadow Weave.

Prerequisite: Wisdom 15 or patron deity Shar.

Benefit: From now on, your spells tap the Shadow Weave instead of the Weave. You can also activate magic items that use the Shadow Weave without taking damage. The saving throw for every spell you cast from the schools of enchantment, illusion, and necromancy increases by +1. You also get a +1 bonus on caster level checks to overcome spell resistance with spells from these schools.

The Shadow Weave proves less than optimal for effects involving energy or matter. Your effective caster level for spells you cast from the schools of evocation or transmutation (except spells with the darkness descriptor) is reduced by one. A 1st-level Shadow Weave user cannot cast spells from these schools at all.

You can no longer cast spells with the light descriptor. No matter what school they are from, such spells automatically fail. Your ability to use magic items that produce light effects is also limited—you cannot invoke an item's light power if its activation method is spell completion or spell trigger.

From now on, any magic item you create is a Shadow Weave item.

This feat originally appeared in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* and was revised in the *Player's Guide to Faerûn*.

deter suspicion, as they both secretly venerate Shar. Sseselheve appreciates the talents of the Fangs, but is very cautious with them, barring them from her private chamber (area **15**) for fear they would somehow recognize her allegiance to the Shadow Weave.

Treasure: The jade statue is a ssarramath, a prayer-focus of Sseth, and is worth 3,500 gp.

13. Thohsvohs's Lair (EL 10)

Two hemispherical chambers run together here, barely containing the workbenches and overflowing chests stuffed into the space. Tools of all varieties are visible, as are incomplete mechanisms of unknown function.

The entrance to this room is trapped (see below).

Creatures: The yuan-ti master trapcrafter Thohsvohs dwells here. When Sseselheve proposed making a trap of Renkilk's Cranny, she knew Thohsvohs would be sent by the Coiled Cabal to refine it. Knowing his ways, she let him discover the dead magic zone for himself, then report back to her in front of a Fang of Sseth that he had found nothing. Sseselheve privately confronted him with the truth later. Though this blackmail initially secured the trap-crafter's loyalty, he has since embraced Shar and is eager to learn the secrets of the Shadow Weave, just as Sseselheve hoped.

Thohsvohs the Ensnaring CR 9

Male yuan-ti pureblood rogue 2/illusionist 6
CE Medium monstrous humanoid
Monster Manual 263

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +11, Spot +9

Languages Abyssal, Chondathan, Common, Draconic, Yuan-Ti

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12
hp 55 (12 HD)
SR 14
Fort +4, **Ref** +12, **Will** +10; evasion

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk rapier +12/+7 (1d6–1/18–20)
Ranged mwk hand crossbow +12 (1d4/19–20)
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +7
Atk Options sneak attack +1d6
Special Actions *detect poison*
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *wand of hold person* (14 charges)
Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 6th, +11 ranged touch)
3rd—*displacement*, extended *invisibility*, *greater magic weapon*, *summon monster III*
2nd—*cat's grace*, *hypnotic pattern* (2) (DC 18), *invisibility*, *scorching ray*
1st—*color spray* (DC 17), *expeditious*

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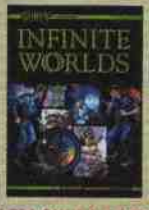

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retreat, mage armor, silent image (DC 17), *true strike*
0–*acid splash* (2), *ghost sound* (DC 16), *mage hand, mending*

Prohibited Schools enchantment, necromancy

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th)
1/day–*animal trance* (DC 13), *cause fear* (DC 12), *charm person* (DC 12), *darkness, entangle* (DC 12)

Abilities Str 8, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 13, Cha 12

SQ *alternate form*, summon familiar (bat named Hvehdiss), trapfinding

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Extend Spell, Greater Spell Focus (illusion), Improved Initiative, Nimble Fingers, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (illusion), Weapon Finesse

Skills Concentration +16, Craft (trapmaking) +21, Disable Device +18, Listen +11, Open Lock +17, Search +11, Spellcraft +19, Spot +9

Possessions combat gear, *bracers of armor +1*, masterwork rapier, masterwork hand crossbow, +1 *human bane hand crossbow bolts* (3), standard hand crossbow bolts (12), masterwork thieves' tools, masterwork trapmaking tools

Spellbook as above plus 0–all except enchantment and necromancy; 1st–*identify, magic missle, shield*; 3rd–*major image*

Tactics: Thohsvohs casts extended *invisibility, greater magic weapon, cat's grace*, and *mage armor* if given warning of the PCs' approach, and uses his wand and *hypnotic pattern* in combat. If intruders catch him unaware, he casts extended *invisibility, displacement*, and *mage armor* on the defensive, sends his familiar to alert Sseselheve, and retreats to area **14** if given the opportunity. He treasures his +1 *human bane* hand crossbow bolts, but uses them if no better option remains.

Trap: Thohsvohs protected the entrance to his workshop with a magical trap, for which only he and Sseselheve know the bypass command word.

Mind Fog **and** *Slow* **Trap:** CR 7; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effects (*mind fog*, 9th-level wizard, DC 17 Will save negates; *slow*, 5th-level wizard, DC 14 Will save negates); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30.

Treasure: Thohsvohs' various trap-crafting gear includes many fine pieces and much more junk. Ten minutes of cherry-picking nets 2,000 gp worth of manuals, materials, and masterwork tools. His spellbook is hidden among portfolios on mechanical mechanisms.

14. The Chasm (EL 10)

The air of this immense cavern is alive with ash floating up from a deep chasm. The ash dances on a steady breeze, edges glowing orange, and a torrent of rushing water can be heard below. The walls extend upwards some fifty or sixty feet before meeting overhead, and drop away twice as far below before plunging into an underground river. A sturdy rope bridge spans the chasm's forty-foot gap, and three columns of rock stand on the far side. Half a dozen covered large wooden buckets stand against the northern wall next to several coils of fine rope.

A shaft near the southern edge of the chasm runs deep into the earth and touches a volcanic vein, and the steady wind through the chasm draws ash up and through. The constant billowing ash obscures vision, and all targets more than 20 feet away have concealment. Vents in the northern end of the cavern eventually reach the surface, but are too narrow for even Small characters to negotiate. The river at the bottom of the chasm is the yuan-ti's source of fresh water. The buckets are used by the halfbloods of area **9** twice daily to fill the various cisterns in the caverns. There are 3 lengths of rope, each 150 feet long.

Creatures: Two Fangs of Sseth and two flying fangs guard the bridge, all stationed on the southern side.

Ils'hil'ssesth and Ils'evhdis'ssesth, male yuan-ti halfblood Fang of Sseth 2: hp 71 each; see page 65.

Flying Fangs (2): hp 34 each; see page 61.

Tactics: If Sseselheve is encountered here, she uses her inspire courage bardic music ability and retreats to area **15**. The Fangs of Sseth drink their potions and climb the rock columns (a move action which gives them cover, as well as higher ground in melee combat), then fire at intruders. The flying fangs attack anyone crossing the bridge or flying across the chasm, and harass intruders after this, targetting Small characters with their constriction ability but otherwise staying on the wing.

15. Dead Magic Zone (EL 11)

The passageway leading into this cavern is trapped (see below).

This hemispherical cavern stretches to a height of thirty feet, and glitters with abundant outcroppings of violet crystals. The caverns' walls and floor have not been worked, but stones and boulders have been piled against the walls to the west and southwest, to no apparent purpose. A large bed sits in the cavern's center, circled by three armoires and two mirrors, with a font holding firewood at the head.

A dead magic zone encompasses this cavern, as indicated on the map. The boulders have been placed strategically to block off border areas in the cavern where the Weave is accessible, as well as a small area within the dead magic zone (see Treasure below). A full round action and a Strength check against DC 20 are required to clear a space large enough for a Medium creature to squeeze out of the dead magic zone.

Any spellcasters that enter the cavern immediately recognize the utter absence of the Weave. Even non-spellcasters may feel the effects of passing into the dead magic zone as their magic items cease functioning.

Tactics: Sseselheve happily confronts the PCs here, unhindered by the dead magic zone thanks to her use of the Shadow Weave. Given time, she casts *invisibility* on herself before the PCs arrive, then casts *deeper darkness* and *Verraketh's shadow crown* when they appear, augmenting her combat powers with her inspire courage and inspire greatness bardic music abilities.

Trap: The trap at position **A** triggers a *repulsion* effect centered at position **B**, intended to prevent intruders' escape from the dead magic zone. Only

Thoshsvohs and Sseselheve know the command word to bypass it.

***Repulsion* Trap:** CR 7; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*repulsion*, 11th-level wizard, 40 ft. radius, DC 19 Will save negates); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

Treasure: All of the magic treasure taken from previous adventuring parties that Sseselheve and Thohsvohs could not themselves use is hidden below the boulders in the southwest corner of the cavern within the dead magic zone (Search DC 25, or 15 if the boulders are moved). The cache consists of a +1 *bashing heavy steel shield*, a +1 *greataxe*, a *wand of ghoul touch* (20 charges), and a *candle of truth*.

The armoires contain Coiled Cabal dispatches, incomplete lyrics, and Sseselheve's personal notes, including research on powerful Selûnites, the intended ultimate victims of her trap.

Development: Magical light anywhere within this cavern ends the rejuvenation of the ghost of Eshayben (area **6**). This can only be accomplished by clearing boulders to gain access to a portion of the cavern in which the Weave is active.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Beyond the defeat of Sseselheve and the discovery of a variety of magic items, the party may also endeavor to end the risks posed by the rejuvenation of Eshayben's ghost and the dead magic zone. The latter task is likely beyond the characters' own power, but can be achieved by sharing the secret of the zone's existence with a powerful Shar-opposing group, such as the Harpers in Berdusk, the followers of Selûne, or the Guardians of the Weave (*Champions of Valor* 82). Should Sordem Sing, Triel's resident rock gnome technician, catch wind of the dead magic zone, he badgers the party to destroy the cavern with smokepowder. Wise characters would do well to consider other options. Award weave-using characters a CR 9 story award for actions leading to the destruction of the dead magic zone.

Scaling the Adventure

To adapt "Requiem of the Shadow Serpent" for groups of characters higher or lower than 9th level, adjust NPC character levels by an amount equal to that by which the average level of characters deviates from 9th level. Specific changes to the adventure include:

7th–8th-level characters: Lower the Search and Disable Device DCs for the slime traps (areas **1** and **3**) to 20. Remove the rattlers from area **2**, one abomination from area **5**, and one tren from areas **7** and **8**. Replace Ils'voh'ssesth with a yuan-ti pureblood in area **9**, and replace the yuan-ti halfbloods with purebloods in area **11**.

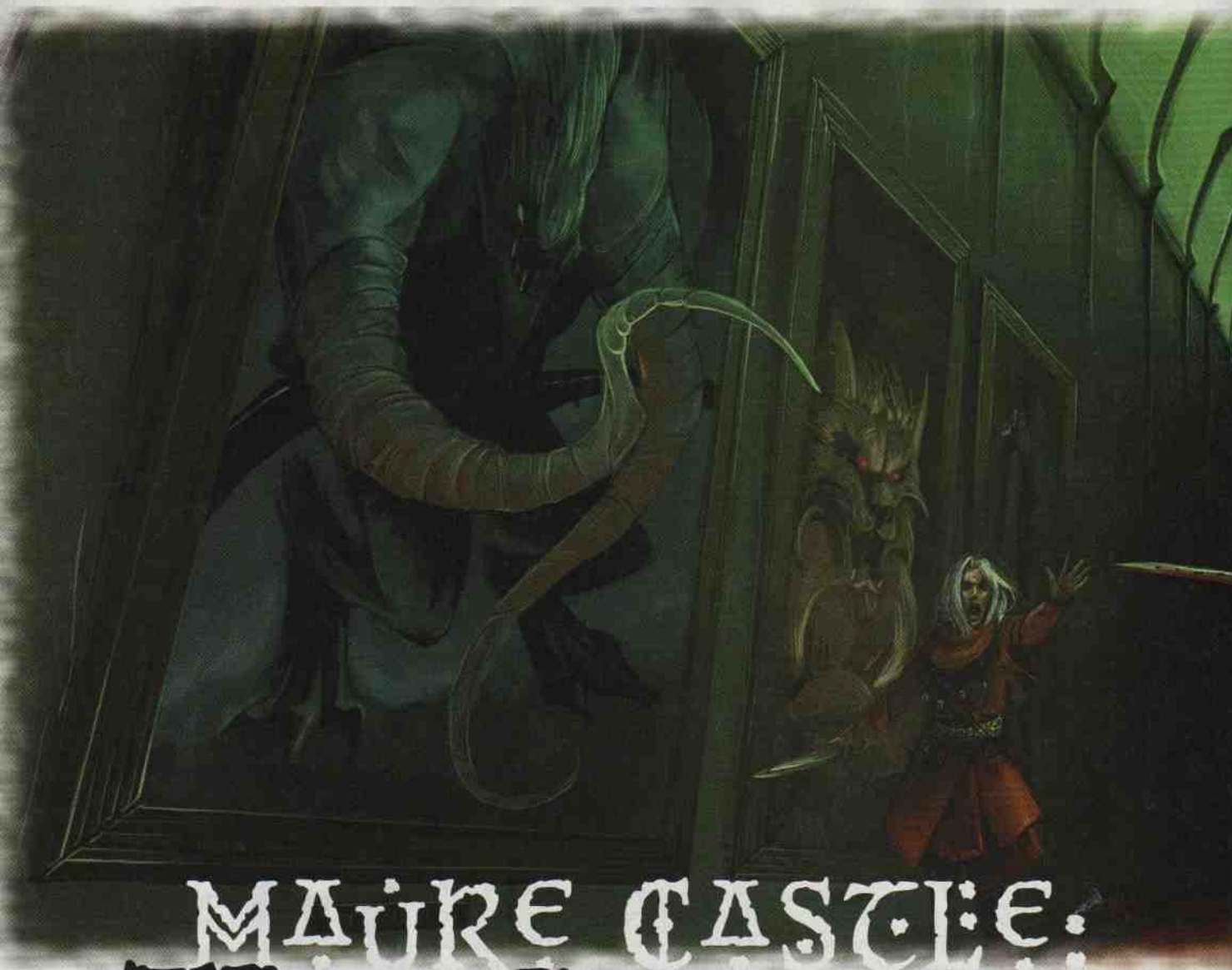
10th–11th-level characters: Raise the Search and Disable Device DCs for the slime traps (areas **1** and **3**) to 30. Change the rattlers in area **2** to Large size. Add two trolls to area **4**, one abomination to area **5**, one tren to areas **7** and **8**, and one yuan-ti halfblood to areas **9** and **11**. Heighten the *repulsion* trap in area **15** to 8th level.

Don't forget to appropriately modify the amount of treasure found in the adventure.

Opponents who elude the characters in the course of the adventure dictate what reprisals the characters are likely to receive. If Sseselheve or Thohsvohs escape, Shar's agents eventually attempt revenge, a fitting tie-in to "The Darkhouse of Saerloon" in *Faiths and Pantheons*. If any yuan-ti survive, the Coiled Cabal hear of the characters' exploits and monitor them, striking in a moment of weakness. The characters may even face revenge attacks for acts they didn't commit: the Red Wizards' inquiries may lead them to assume the party was responsible for the disappearance of their two itinerant evokers.

Anson Caralya wishes to dedicate this adventure to his childhood pet boa constrictor, who is surely crushing a pack of wolves, two leopards, and a llama in his mighty coils in Ophidian Valhalla right now. Anson's previous appearance in DUNGEON *was "The Quicksilver Hourglass" in issue 123.*

Mt.Zogon
HEY! SOME LAVA OOZED FROM THE GROUND NEAR THAT DEVIL-WORSHIPPING MINOTAUR'S HOUSE.
KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THE MINOTAUR WHILE I CAST A FEW PROTECTIVE SPELLS AND DO SOMETHING.
ALL DONE!
QUICK! LET'S GO!
RARRGH!!!
BY TONY MOSELEY
ZOGONIA.COM



MAURE CASTLE: THE GREATER HALLS

BY ROBERT J. KUNTZ
BY EVA WIDERMANN
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI
GREYHAWK, HIGH LEVEL (13TH–20TH), DUNGEON CRAWL

The dungeons below the notorious Maure Castle have long lured adventurers and treasure seekers—typically to their dooms. One infamous level of the dungeon was said to have been constructed with each family member's individual tastes in mind, a place where the Maures could go to rest, relax, and more importantly, store favored (and usually dangerous) works of art or engage in the creation of personalized magic items. This was known as the Greater Halls, and the dangers presented by these personal curios are the least of the perils to be encountered therein.

"The Greater Halls" is a D&D adventure for four 17th-level characters. While set under the infamous ruins of Maure Castle in the *World of* Greyhawk setting, this dungeon level is self-contained and can be easily transported to any campaign setting of your choice.

The Greater Halls can be reached from above via the level known as "The Statuary," which was detailed in Dungeon #112. Characters who have adventured through "Maure Castle" in issue #112 or issue #124's "Chamber of Antiquities" should be more than ready to extend their exploration downward to the Greater Halls, but it isn't required that you run these adventures before running this one.

Adventure Background

The Maure family used this level for purposes both mundane and arcane, although as time wore on and the Maures became more and more obsessed, two in particular began to spend most of their time here. Bersteck Maure maintained a hidden laboratory in a dimensional pocket on this level, rigging several secret rooms with magic wells to control access to his hideout. He spent many hours experimenting upon conjured demons, devils, and other beings with his strange alchemy, producing new and dangerous variations of these creatures and constructing magical objects by draining their fiendish power.

In another part of the dungeon, Afelbain Maure housed a legion of undead, packing them tightly into a series of hidden caverns his own secret army. When a legion of

demonic forces invaded the castle (led, in part, by the treacherous Elluvia Maure), Afelbain's undead legion played a key role in defeating the demons.

One other entity remains interested in the Greater Halls. From a velvet throne in her palace on the Abyss, Malcanthet has not forgotten Maure Castle. The reasons for her interest in the castle ruins remain hidden, and other unfolding events far to the south claim most of her attentions these days, yet she retains a presence in the Greater Halls. A long-enthralled cleric named Mozul watches over the dungeon from an ancient summoning chamber, waiting to report anything of note that should develop in the region while taking advantage of the dungeon's unique features and resources to do a little magical research of his own.

Adventure Hooks

While "The Greater Halls" is meant to serve as a continuation of a long-running "Maure Castle" campaign, this dungeon level can also serve as its own adventure. Two possible adventure hooks are detailed here. In both cases, the reward promised for the service in question should amount to about 10,000 gp per PC.

A Devilish Recipe: Word of a strange and potent alchemical recipe has been circulating—a salve that distils the essence of a bone devil into something that can be applied to mortal skin. Rumor holds that Bersteck Maure was the last to possess this formula. The PCs could be hired by greedy alchemists to seek out Bersteck's lab for this recipe, or they could be hired by a good church to seek out the last surviving recipe and destroy it.

The Crystal Succubus Skull: A decadent member of the local nobility approaches the PCs with a request. He has heard that a man named Mozul dwells in the Greater Halls of Maure Castle, and that in his possession is a crystal succubus skull said to grant anyone who holds it a vision of the queen of succubi herself. The noble is obsessed with Malcanthet, and offers the PCs a reward if they can find the skull and bring it to him. If they agree, he provides them with a cushion-lined darkwood coffer to carry it in, and warns them to avoid touching the skull, since he fears that whatever secrets it might contain could do harm if it's not handled properly.

THE GREATER HALLS

The physical appearance of this level is dry, dusty, and forlorn—the chambers are in good repair, but haven't been visited in decades, if not centuries. The walls and floors are crafted from granite, with ceilings generally about 20 feet high unless otherwise noted.

Most of the doors on this level are made of wood and reinforced with iron. While most aren't locked, they do tend to stick, requiring a DC 23 Strength check to wrench open unless otherwise indicated in the text. Secret doors require a DC 30 Search check to locate unless otherwise specified.

All magical spell effects in place in the Greater Halls function at caster level 22nd, unless otherwise noted in the text.

1. Entry Corridor

This flight of stairs leads up to the Statuary level above. After about 100 feet, the stairs end at a circular landing, from which two sloping passageways lead upward. The northern one curves back on itself to the south before finally ending at what appears to be a blank wall. A secret door hidden in this wall (DC 25 Search check) opens into area **110** of the Statuary. The eastern exit slopes up and curves southward, eventually reaching area **119** of the Statuary. See *Dungeon* #112 for details of these areas.

2. Reliquary Entrance

An ancient-looking statue broods in this alcove. Details are difficult to make out in its eroded form, but it seems to have once depicted a kneeling humanoid figure.

The statue is a relic from truly ancient times, it being one of the family holdings the Maures managed to rescue and transport to the new world after they were forced to migrate. The sculpture itself is ruined and without value, but a DC 35 Search check of the statue discovers a tiny keyhole at the base. Inserting the key from area **31** into this hole causes the wall behind the statue to fade into the Ethereal Plane for as long as the key remains in the hole. Beyond, a flight of well-worn steps leads even deeper into the ground.

A message written in Abyssal is inscribed into the wall at the top of these stairs. It reads: "Know that you approach the first temple to 'Y,' our master, and that the appropriate sacrifices should be readied!"

These stairs descend for 80 feet before reaching another level of Maure Castle—The Reliquary.

3. Waiting Room

Other than a plush sofa and a small table that holds a silver basin and two silver cups, this room appears to be empty.

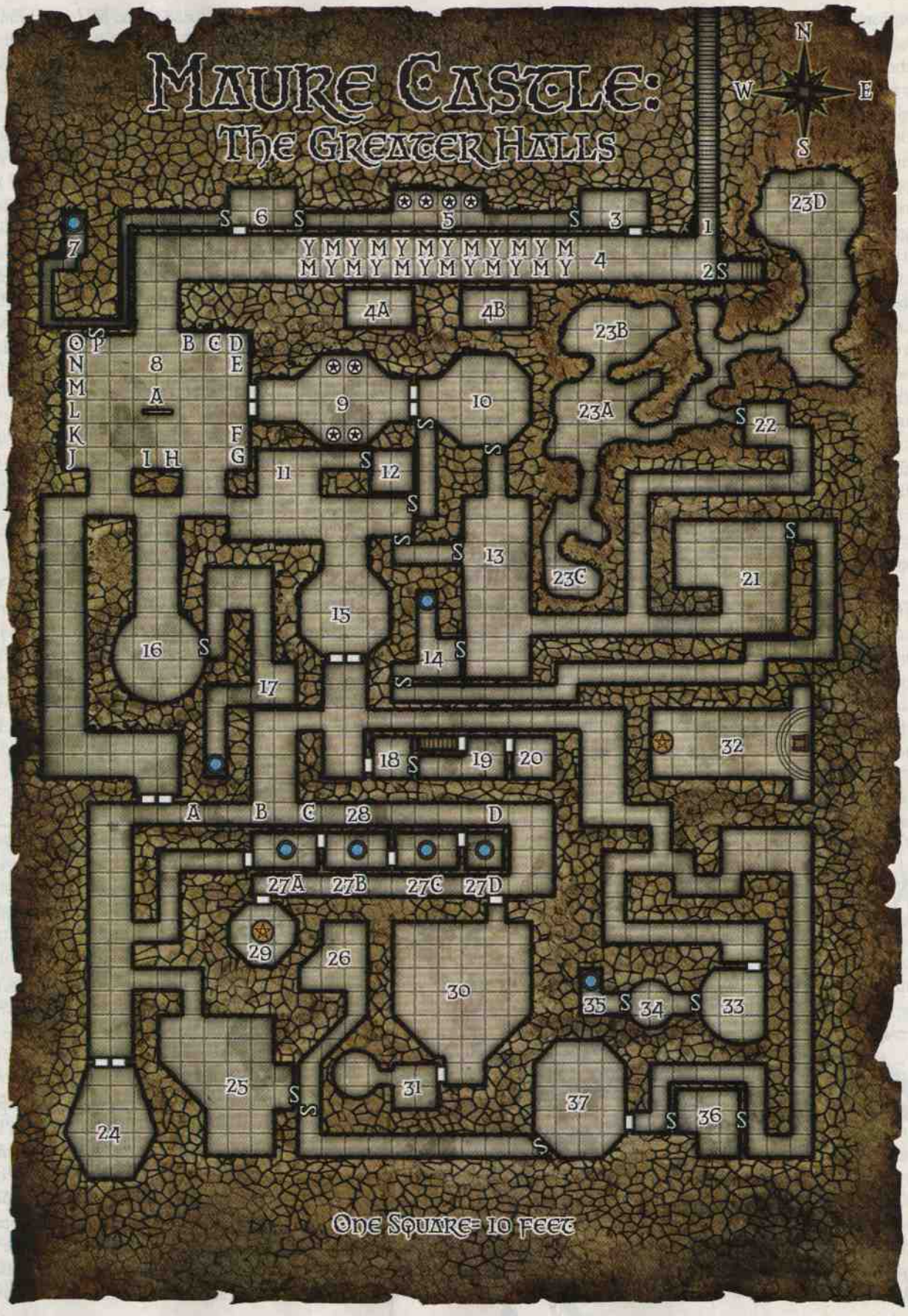
Treasure: The basin was once magical, and constantly filled with fresh, cool water. Its magic properties have long since faded, but both it and the two cups are still worth 30 gp apiece.

4. Demons of the Soul (EL 18)

The floor here is decorated with ten-foot-square tiles in alternating patterns, either bearing a large yellow "M" or a large green "Y."

These tiles are a complex ward designed to allow those who know its secret easy passage. The squares are magical and must be traversed in a certain order to continue without mishap. If a miscue occurs, two sections of wall to the south (marked on the map as secret doors) fade into the Ethereal Plane, releasing the monsters in areas **4A** and **4B** into the hall. Once these wall sections become ethereal, they remain so for 10 minutes, after which the walls become solid again. To pass safely, one must progress down the hall (from east to west) by stepping on tiles in the following pattern: M-M-Y-Y-Y-M-Y-M-M-Y-Y-M.

This entire hallway is also warded by a variant of *dimensional anchor* that reroutes attempts to use teleportation magic. Anyone attempting to teleport into or out of this hallway instead appears in area **4A** or **4B** (determined randomly). This teleportorial redirec-


Maure Castle:
The Greater Halls
N
W
E
S
One Square= 10 feet

tion functions in these areas as well; anyone who tries to teleport into or out of these areas simply ends up back in one of these rooms (again determined randomly). There is no way to trigger the ethereal walls from within either chamber; in order to escape, a person trapped within must either physically bypass a wall (with damage or by using magic like *passwall* or *stone shape*) or wait until someone in the hallway to the north triggers the tiles to open the secret doors.

Creatures: Imprisoned in areas **4A** and **4B** are several terrifying undead fiends known as soul demons. Each of these chambers contains two soul demons—they quickly and ravenously fall upon any creatures that appear in their lairs. If the secret doors open to the north, the soul demons swoop out of these rooms to attack any living creatures in the hallway beyond.

Soul Demons (4): hp 203; see Appendix.

5. Hall of Iron Statues

Standing against the northern wall are four large iron statues of ominous seven-foot-tall men. Each wears a cowl over its head, but their stern expressions are still disturbingly lifelike.

These statues were put here for show. Each radiates strong transmutation magic, but this is a red herring meant to confuse the curious. A DC 30 Search of the westernmost statue reveals a secret compartment in its right foot which, if opened, reveals a small pull-handle. If pulled upwards, it slowly falls to its original position over the next three minutes. For these three minutes, the trap in area **6** is disabled.

6. Old-School Mayhem (EL 13)

Unless the trap in this room has been disabled (see area **5**), this room should appear empty to players when they first look into it. An *illusory wall* (CL 22nd) gives the room the appearance of having a 20-foot-high ceiling, but in fact the ceiling is 100 feet high and studded with a forest of long thin spikes.

Trap: This entire room is an insidious trap. A *reverse gravity* field fills the chamber—anyone who enters the room immediately falls upward, through the illusory wall, and into the forest of spikes hanging from the actual ceiling 100 feet above. The spikes have been coated with a thick anticoagulant that not only causes those impaled on them to bleed, but also causes them to fall into an endless sleep.

If the *reverse gravity* effect is dispelled, the heavy iron spikes (which simply rest in deep holes in the ceiling and are not attached) dislodge and fall to the ground in a hail of piercing death. Every creature in the room is attacked by 1d4+4 of these spikes at an attack roll of +10 melee (1d4+5 each plus poison).

Bleeding Coma Trap: CR 13; magical; location trigger; automatic reset; 100 ft. deep (10d6, fall); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4+4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 plus wounding and poison); wounding (anyone who takes damage from a spike bleeds for 1 Con damage per round until magically healed; Con loss is cumulative per spike); poison (Fortitude DC 25; initial damage sleep for 1 minute, secondary damage sleep forever); Search DC 15; Disable Device DC 35.

7. First Ritual Well

A low stone well filled with sparkling water sits at the end of the passageway. Carved into the wall to the right is a symbol of a foot.

This is the first of four ritual pools the Maures used to enable entry into a complex of rooms to the south (areas **27A–27D**). Any character that dips a foot in the pool is invigorated and gains the effects of a *cure critical wounds* (CL 22nd). This is part 1 of the ritual required to open the magic door at area **27**.

8. Gallery of the Gods

This huge room is some sort of gallery—towering, twelve-foot-tall portraits of terrifying, and in some cases oddly familiar, beings hang on the walls. Each portrait is rendered in stunning, lifelike detail on a black canvas and framed in gold. Below each shines an inscribed plaque. A large flat pillar in the center of the room displays an additional portrait apart from those on the walls.

The portraits on the walls here depict the divine and demonic patrons of the Maure family—the name of the notable depicted in each appears in florid script on the plaque below the individual portrait. There are no artist signatures apparent, though they appear to be done by the same artist. All of the frames radiate strong abjuration magic. Most of these

Soul Demon

frames protect each portrait with a *temporal stasis* effect (caster level 22nd), although there are some exceptions. If this effect is removed, the paintings can be taken—although they lose their magical properties, they remain fine works of art.

The pictures were placed in this gallery at various times during each family member's life to give recognition to a patron that strongly influenced that particular person. It seems that the Maure line worshipped (or at least honored) a diverse pantheon during their reign. Most of the paintings impart powerful but momentary emotions and sensations if they're touched; these feelings have no game effect but can still be disconcerting. Some of the portraits possess additional qualities as well, as described below.

A. "Y": This portrait alone does not feature a plaque. Hanging from the central pillar, it occupies a superior (if lone) position in relation to the other portraits. A large red "Y" is painted upon the majority of the canvas. This picture radiates the strongest magic of all present here, but lends no clue as to who or what "Y" is. A DC 30 Appraise check reveals that it is the most ancient of the portraits here as well. Anyone who studies this portrait gets a nagging feeling that something is strangely familiar about the "Y" representation, but the feeling always falls short of full realization. It also seems obvious that this particular illustration was not rendered by the same artist who provided the other pieces. No known magic, spells, skills, feats, studies or petitionings of the current gods can ascertain who "Y" is. Characters who have explored other levels of Maure Castle may believe that "Y" and the demon lord Yeenoghu are the same entity, but the fact that Yeenoghu has his own portrait in this hall seems to say otherwise.

B. "Beltar, The Dark Mother": This painting depicts a sneering hag of a woman standing in the deep shadow of a cave entrance. If touched, the painting imparts a brief impression of overwhelming hatred.

C. "Yeenoghu, Lord of the Caverns Below": This depicts the leering, feral visage of the hyena-faced Demon Lord of Gnolls. A PC who touches this painting immediately receives a flood of powerful but conflicting empathetic impressions of abandonment, deception, mistrust, betrayal, and finally revenge.

D. "Fraz-Urb'luu, Prince of Deception": Darkness surrounds a large fiendish humanoid figure, its taloned hands reaching out as if grasping something unseen before it. Touching the canvas causes the image to swim into life to depict numerous scenes, clouded and hazy as if seen in a dream. The character who touched the painting slumps to the ground, twitching and moaning (effectively helpless) as the painting shifts through four scenes—to this PC, he appears to be part of the scene played out in the painting but can do nothing to interact with it. Anyone observing the four scenes must make a DC 25 Will save to avoid being similarly transfixed. Those who make the Will save may make a DC 30 Spot check—success here means that the viewer notices the olive-skinned boy is similar to the subject of portrait N. The four scenes, in order, are as follows:

1. A smiling boy of olive complexion stands on a large table, surrounded by at least a dozen cowled figures. He bows, his bright blue eyes shining like suns, and his light blue robes are festooned with various symbols of the god Fharlanghn.
2. The same boy now stands before a tall woman with red hair and green eyes. She holds his hand and points into the darkness of the starry night sky.
3. The boy enters a fantastic portal into a strange black void, lit only by strong blue rays of light from his eyes. He looks back over his shoulder, unsure, then steps into the portal and vanishes.
4. The red-haired woman smiles and turns away. A huge, inhuman shape wrapped in darkness rises from her frame, as if it had adhered to her shadow, and then vanishes into the skies above.

After this last image, the portrait reverts to its depiction of Fraz-Urb'luu once again.

E. "Pyremius, The Murdering Flame": This portrait depicts a hideous bald man with burning skin; in one hand he wields a red longsword and in the other a searing whip. Nothing seems to transpire if this painting is touched. However, the next time that PC touches a living creature, that creature is affected by a maximized quickened still silent *poison* spell (CL 20th). The painting can grant this power only once per day.

F. "Graz'zt, The Dark Prince": Depicted here is a darkly handsome man displaying a vicious looking wavy-bladed bastard sword in a six-fingered hand. With his other hand he reaches out to the viewer, as if offering his sword in trade for something. If this painting is touched, the PC feels a burning sensation as if the painting were made of acid. This deals no damage, but does grant one random slashing weapon carried by the character the *corrosive burst* quality (as *shocking burst*, but acid damage). If the weapon was nonmagic, it also gains a +1 enhancement bonus. The painting can grant this benefit once per day, and the enhancement to the slashing weapon persists for 24 hours.

G. "Syrul, The Forked Tongue": This painting depicts a wretched old woman armed with a dagger and riding a night-black horse with burning hooves and smoking breath. A character who touches this painting feels an almost overwhelming sensation of treachery and falsehood about himself.

H. "Wee Jas, Queen of Magic": A regal-looking woman with mysterious dark eyes and flowing red hair sits upon an ornately carved chair etched with occult symbols that represent a strange, unknown magical formula. Her robes are white with glosses of every color imaginable sewn into it with tiny threads. She wears a crown of platinum and wields a ruby dagger in her left hand. Her right hand is raised, palm forward, towards the viewer.

With a DC 26 Knowledge (arcana) check, the viewer realizes that the occult symbols represent all known arcane spells, and then some. If the painting is touched, the viewer feels a nearly overwhelming urge to gift unto Wee Jas a powerful magic item. The PC should decide on his own to act on this urge or not. Wee Jas won't accept any magic item worth less than 50,000 gp—if one

of this amount or more is offered, the item vanishes and her right hand in the portrait glows with gold light. If the character then touches his palm to hers, he can immediately prepare all of his spells as if he had rested for a night (characters who cast spells spontaneously have all of their spell slots return). This benefit may be bestowed once per day per sacrifice, but never more than once per character per day.

I. "Orcus, Prince of the Undead": This image depicts a goat-headed demon with a paunchy gut and a skull-tipped wand clenched in his meaty fist. Anyone viewing the painting experiences a feeling of dread—a character who actually touches the painting receives a brief vision of his own open grave.

Over the next 2–5 days, any character who touched the painting experiences nightmares of undead legions summoned by various obscure and shadowy human figures to confront hordes of demons issuing from a large, void-like pit. Thousands pour forth each night to overrun the opposing undead, inundating them like water over sand upon a beach. On the last day of nightmares, the PC has a vision of a wizened man with flowing blond hair fighting these same demonic hordes in a large chamber. If the characters confronted Afelbain Maure on the Statuary level (or have seen other depictions of him) they recognize this man as him. Afelbain stands upon a huge eight-pointed star made of diamond, and heaped around him are mounds of bodies, both undead and demonic. A darkness descends on him, and as it passes it reveals he has vanished.

J. "Dagon, Prince of the Darkened Depths": This illustration depicts a shadowy, indistinct form made of writhing tentacles, gaping fanged maws, and huge pale blue eyes—it's impossible to make out an exact shape. The longer this image is observed, the more detail the viewer can pick out. A character who observes the painting for one minute notices that the eyes have focused upon him, at which point he must make a DC 25 Will save or develop an overwhelming fear of the sea. As long as the ocean is in sight, this character takes a –4 penalty on Will saving throws. He also takes a –4 penalty on all attack rolls against creatures with the aquatic subtype, and on the first round of combat against such a creature he must make a DC 25 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d6 rounds. This condition may be removed by *heal* or *greater restoration* if the caster succeeds on a DC 30 caster level check. *Miracle* or *wish* can automatically cure the condition. A character who touches the painting finds that it feels cold and slimy, but receives no other sensations.

K. "Baphomet, Prince of Beasts": This portrait depicts a bull-headed man of gargantuan proportions. His right horn shines a brilliant gold, whereas his left horn is dull black. If either of these horns is touched, a real horn manifests and tumbles from the picture onto the floor, and the horn touched vanishes from the painting. The horns fade and return to the painting after 24 hours have passed. Until that point, they confer specific effects upon any who carry them.

Golden Horn (Bestial Frenzy): Any creature that claims the horn believes (wrongly) that it can grant him the bestial fury of a barbarian in combat. In actuality, the horn grants those who attack the character a +2 profane bonus on attack rolls and a +3 bonus on damage rolls. The carrier cannot voluntarily dispose of this horn without first having a *break enchantment* or *remove curse* spell cast upon the horn.

Black Horn (Bestial Dormancy): Grants a +6 enhancement bonus to Strength, and causes the guardians in area **9** to remain dormant.

L. "Demogorgon, Prince of Demons": This illustration depicts the tentacled demon lord in a cavern, his two malign heads gazing at the viewer. Anyone who touches this painting feels for a brief moment a second, malevolent version of his personality writhing in his mind and soul.

M. "Kerzit, of the Black Heart": This portrait depicts a cavern. In the distance, at the far end of the cavern, is the figure of a bipedal wolf-like demon with four arms—two tentacles and two mantis-like. Every round someone views the painting, Kerzit seems closer and closer, growing in size, until after 5 rounds the canvas depicts only its face. A viewer can only look away by making a DC 20 Will save. On the 6th round, Kerzit seems to crawl forth from the painting to tear the entire party to ribbons—treat this effect as a *weird* spell (DC 23, CL 22nd) that affects everyone in this room. After the spell effect resolves, the painting returns to normal (but does not activate again for 24 hours).

N. "Dalt, The Opener of Ways": This portrait has been defaced by many noticeable and deep claw marks. Unlike the other portraits, only the frame of this picture is protected by *temporal stasis*, and the painting itself may be manipulated with ease. A *make whole* spell repairs the damage done to it (*mending* isn't powerful enough to fix it).

If the painting is repaired, it depicts a young boy of light olive complexion with almost elven features (yet lacking the pointed ears)—this is the same boy from the visions imparted by painting **D**. His bright blue eyes sparkle as if the greatest sapphires known to Oerth were exposed to the brightest rays of the sun. He neither smiles nor grimaces, but stares dispassionately ahead. His garb is singular, a black robe interwoven with silver thread to represent a multitude of occult symbols. The symbols are of obscure origin for the most part, except for the largest—a stylized letter "F" used by the temple priests of Fharlanghn.

The other symbols are written in an ancient and obscure tongue called "Strands," developed and used by an ancient secret society. The magical nature of these symbols resist translation, and spells like *comprehend languages* simply fail—instead, the caster receives a very strong feeling of menace and doom, as the knowledge of this language is protected and hidden by none other than Wee Jas herself. Some believe that Wee Jas only holds the key to the translation, and that even she doesn't understand the language and must extract this lore from even more mysterious forces.

A 7th-level or higher spell can pierce these defenses, as can a DC 40 Decipher Script check. As soon as the words are translated, the reader must make a DC

20 Fortitude save or suffer 3d6 points of Constitution drain. On a successful save, only 1d6 points of Constitution damage occurs. A character that dies from this effect crumbles away to dust, whereupon the remains are bourn away upon a howling wind to a greatly disturbed goddess.

Unfortunately, the meaning of the translated symbols may not seem worth the effort: "The Stars are my guides, the Voids of space my brethren, and Chaos my sire." Further insight into this secret society, Strands, and Dalt's history are doubtless hidden within even deeper levels of Maure Castle.

O. "Shad-Duan, Lord of the Shadow Realm": This depicts a towering humanoid shadow, a pair of inky, curling horns sprouting from its head and reaching up to a canopy of black clouds above. The horns twist about each other before piercing the clouds and disappearing from sight into their dark recesses. Anyone who touches this painting must make a DC 24 Will save. Failure indicates nothing happens. On a success, the character becomes transfixed in thought for one round while the picture animates for a moment in his mind and speaks in a sonorous voice that only he can hear: "The way is barred. You must find the staff of your sire, so that he may return." The PC then slumps to the ground unconscious, awakening one round later looking more haggard for the experience but retaining the haunting sentences in his mind. The magic of this portrait functions only once.

P. "Tiamat, The Chromatic Dragon": A depiction of an immense, five-headed dragon in a vast cavern fills the frame of this portrait. If the picture is observed for more than a minute, a marvelous transformation occurs—the picture animates as a tiny human figure steps before the queen, bowing to her in supplication. His robes are black but his face remains obscured, his back to the viewer, as the queen's blue head drops slightly toward the man and its tongue licks his head. The representation then reverts to Tiamat alone, as first viewed.

Observers who make a DC 25 Search check of the painting after this effect note that two of Tiamat's heads (red and white) now have minute, golden words written upon them. The words are so tiny that it takes a DC 30 Search check to read them—use of a magnifying glass grants a +10 bonus on this check. The words reveal a sentence, starting upon the red dragon's head and ending upon the white's: "To avoid her wrath, speak her name and pass." This refers to the bypass codeword for the trap in area **15**.

A sliding secret door here (DC 30 Search to locate) causes the entire wall (picture included) to pivot outward 2 feet and then slide to the right for 10 feet, revealing a corridor beyond. The door slides back into place after five minutes.

Treasure: Each of the portraits, if removed from their frames (see above), is worth 1,000 gp. Note that the entities depicted in these portraits are, to some extent, linked to them; they'll know if the portraits are removed from Maure Castle and may send minions to investigate.

9. Bestial Statues (EL 16)

Along the north and south walls of this octagonal room stand four stone statues set upon plain granite pedestals—each statue depicts a horse-sized monstrous eight-legged lizard. The floor is strewn with hundreds of humanoid bones.

Creatures: The four statues are in fact abyssal greater basilisks under the effects of a permanent *statue* spell. Unless one of the PCs carries the Horn of Bestial Dormancy (see area **7K**), the four basilisks immediately attack any intruders.

Abyssal Greater Basilisks (4): hp 189 each; *Monster Manual* 24.

10. Bersteek's Auxiliary Treasure Room (EL 18)

Opening these doors requires a DC 25 Strength check, as they are blocked by a large mound of coins on the other side.

This large hexagonal room has a vaulted ceiling 40 feet high. Piled ankle deep in places across the floor is a fortune in gold and copper coins, with many gems and an odd piece of jewelry here and there for variety.

This was once Bersteck's treasury. Originally, numerous dimensional pockets in the air above contained this wealth, but over time the magic used to hold this treasure faded, releasing it into the room proper in a rain of gold and copper.

Creature: Bersteck was no fool—he placed a special guardian here to protect his treasury. Although the magic of his vault has failed, his guardian has not. Hidden in a twenty-foot-deep, twenty-foot-wide pit in the center of the room, covered by a layer of opaque glass, waits an ancient ocher-colored bebilith. Noticing the trap door requires a DC 35 Search check, although the bebilith doubtless bursts forth before such is necessary.

If the PCs enter by way of the double doors, the sound of coins clattering over the ground immediately alerts the bebilith and it readies an action to burst out of its pit as soon as it hears anyone above. When it explodes from its pit, all creatures in the room must make a DC 18 Reflex save or take 4d6 points of slashing damage from flying shards of glass. The bebilith gains a +4 bonus on this save, and may apply its damage reduction to any damage it suffers.

Ochre Bebilith **CR 18**

Advanced bebilith
CE Gargantuan outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil)
Monster Manual 42
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +30, Spot +30
Languages Abyssal (does not speak); telepathy 100 ft.

AC 25, touch 8, flat-footed 25
hp 377 (26 HD); **DR** 10/good
Fort +25, **Ref** +17, **Will** +16

Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.
Melee bite +35 (4d6+13/19–20 plus poison) and 2 claws +33 (3d6+6/19–20)
Ranged web +24 (4/day, entangle)
Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.
Base Atk +26; **Grp** +51
Atk Options rend armor (6d6+26)
Special Actions web 4/day (+24 ranged touch, DC 33)

Abilities Str 36, Dex 15, Con 30, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 13

Feats Cleave, Improved Critical (bite, claw), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite, claw), Multiattack, Power Attack, Track

Skills Climb +50, Hide +19, Jump +46, Listen +30, Move Silently +30, Search +29, Sense Motive +30, Spot +30

Plane Shift (Su) The ochre bebilith cannot use this ability; it is bound to guard this chamber.

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 33, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con.

Treasure: The coins strewn on the floor amount to 34,800 gp and 1,462,000 cp. Additionally, there are 130 100 gp gems and 4 necklaces of ruby and silver jewelry worth 3,000 gp each. If the PCs investigate the pit, they discover an extra 3,800 gp and an emerald and gold tiara worth 5,000 gp.

11. Fireball Trap (EL 12)

Trap: Anyone who approaches within five feet of the northern wall here triggers a maximized *fireball* trap. The trap continues to trigger as long as anyone remains within five feet of the wall. A hidden lock bypass on the south wall can deactivate the trap.

Ruinous *Fireball* Trap: CR 12; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; hidden lock bypass (Search DC 40, Open Lock DC 40); spell effect (maximized *fireball*, 60 points of fire damage, 20th-level wizard, DC 16 Reflex save half); multiple targets (all creatures in the northern section of this room); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33.

12. Star Room

This dusty room smells of ancient, moldy books. A small, empty bookstand sits in the center of the room, while the north, west, and south walls are painted with white symbols of eight-pointed stars.

Treasure: The center point of the north wall's star is actually a one-foot-radius secret compartment (DC 20 Search). Within sits a crumbling divine scroll and a piece of ancient parchment. The scroll bears golden symbols of Wee-Jas inscribed before and after each spell. These special symbols enhance the caster level of the magic on the scroll, allowing the caster to utilize his own caster level when activating the spells. This scroll is a rare find worth triple its base market value. The spells contained on the scroll are *protection from spells*, *spell resistance*, and *spell turning*.

The ancient parchment must be handled gingerly (or restored with a *make whole* spell) with a DC 20 Dexterity check; failure indicates it crumbles to fragments. The parchment has a short message scrawled upon it in red ink: "The Elders have several of their order aligned against us. We must either return the Eye or ascertain its ancient use. Pray that the boy opens the way so HE may come. My niece is not always the trustworthy sort. Afelbain should follow her to make sure the plan is forwarded without error."

The extreme bottom part of the parchment bears a short sentence in a reddish brown ink (perhaps blood) which appears to be an intercession written in Abyssal: "May the Lord of Deception, Fraz-Urb'luu, grant us our victory." An eight-pointed star seal is burnt into the parchment to end this prayer.

13. Long Chamber

The air in this long hall reeks of decay and ruin, and dust hangs heavy in the air. A ten-foot-high heap of bones lies to the south.

Creatures: Most of Afelbain's undead army was destroyed when he mobilized it ages ago. Remaining here are fifty ghouls, the partial remnants of this legion. All of them react identically to intrusion—with drooling hisses and a charge to the attack!

Ghouls (50): hp 13 each; *Monster Manual* 119.

Tactics: Although there are a lot of them, a legion of 50 ghouls should be little problem for a group of 17th-level characters. If you use the *Dungeon Master's Guide* II in your game, you can rebuild these ghouls into a mob using the rules on page 59–61 of that book, but even then it's only a CR 8 encounter. This fight isn't intended to actually challenge the PCs as much as it is flavor for this section of the dungeon—if it gives the PCs a chance to revel in their high-level destructive power, so much the better.

14. Second Ritual Well

A low stone well filled with sparkling water sits at the end of the passageway. Carved into the wall to the right is a symbol of a foot.

This room is identical to area 7, save that the pool bestows a *remove disease* (CL 22nd). This is part two of the ritual required to open the magic door at area **27**.

15. Tiamat's Wrath (EL 15)

Trap: This otherwise empty room contains a deadly trap known as Tiamat's Wrath. The trap is sprung the moment anyone enters this room, at which point the two iron doors to the south close and lock (DC 35 Open Lock). At the same instant, gigantic but ghostly dragon heads writhe out of the walls—black, green, blue, red, and white. The heads blast everything in the room (including the ten-foot-long hall to the north) with acid, cold, fire, and electricity, continuing to do so until disarmed or all creatures are slain or driven from the room.

Tiamat's Wrath: CR 15; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; secret password bypass (see area **7p**); 20d10 damage (5d10 acid, 5d10 cold, 5d10 electricity, and 5d10 fire, Reflex DC 30 half); multiple targets (all creatures in room); Search DC 40; Disable Device DC 40.

16. Old Meeting Hall

Teetering piles of debris in various states of decomposition are stacked throughout this chamber, which appears to have once been a meeting place. Now the once-richly-decorated tables, divans, chairs, ottomans, and other furniture are all ruined—in fact, most of it appears purposefully crushed and scattered. The walls are decorated with red curtains that form rectangular areas the size of large portraits, but any paintings that may have once graced these walls are missing—they do not seem to be part of the remains in this chamber.

Treasure: Searching through the mess reveals a large cameo of white coral set on a platinum chain studded with diamonds worth 2,300 gp. Within the cameo is a tiny portrait of a lithe girl, perhaps in her late teens, with green, penetrating eyes, red hair, and a mischievous countenance. An inscription on the backside reads, "To my most darling niece. A keepsake for you to remember your favorite Uncle by."

17. Third Ritual Well

A low stone well filled with sparkling water sits at the end of the passageway. Carved into the wall to the right is a symbol of a foot.

This room is identical to area 7, save that the pool bestows a *restoration* (CL 22nd). This is part three of the ritual required to open the magic door at area 27.

18. The Castle Revealed

Upon the walls here is a fresco of a large castle, with rugged hills and mountains looming in the background.

This fresco depicts Maure Castle before the magical catastrophe struck. The secret door to the east is cleverly built into one of the gates in the castle walls, and can be discovered with a DC 30 Search check.

19. The Eclipsed Temple

A wall fresco depicts throngs of people gathered about a nondescript temple. The sun overhead is nearly eclipsed by one of the moons.

Beyond the western door is a flight of dusty steps that leads to another level of Maure Castle—The Outer Sanctum. This level was used as a gathering place for family meetings, and includes a sacrificial pit to the mysterious entity known as "Y."

20. The Approach

Upon the walls here is a strangely realistic fresco of the nighttime skies, with a bright red star at the center. A dark comet shoots toward the star from the void of space.

Apart from the somewhat haunting fresco, there's nothing of interest in this chamber.

21. Malcanthet's Wardens (EL 19)

This immense chamber may have once been a fantastic banquet hall, but now the marble tables lie in rubble and the chairs in splinters. The vaulted ceiling arches to a height of sixty feet above, and tall alcoves lining the walls reach nearly to this height. In some, statues of humans look down upon the room below, while others are empty, their statues lying in rubble at their bases.

Creature: Not long after the catastrophe that struck Maure Castle, Malcanthet placed three 25-foot-tall succubi in this chamber, charging them with lying in wait in this section of the Greater Halls to ambush any surviving Maures (particularly Afelbain) who returned to this section of the dungeon to gather the remnants of the undead legion in area 23. When the Queen of Succubi sent her agent Mozul (see area 37) here, she also commanded these succubi to assist him in any way he required. The succubi detest Mozul and want little more than to abandon what they've come to view as a pointless task, but they still fear their mistress and have not yet made an attempt to abandon their posts.

Wardens of Malcanthet (3) **CR 16**

Female advanced elite succubus

CE Huge outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil, tanar'ri)

Monster Manual 47

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +33, Spot +33

Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 ft., tongues

AC 35, touch 21, flat-footed 32

hp 230 (20 HD); **DR** 10/cold iron or good

Immune electricity, poison

Resist acid 10, cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 18

Fort +18, **Ref** +15, **Will** +14

Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average)

Melee* *+2 flaming burst whip dagger* +25/+20/+15/+10 (2d6+27/17–20 plus 1d6 fire/1d10 fire)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft. (40 ft. with whip)

Base Atk +20; **Grp** +39

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Power Attack

Special Actions energy drain, change shape, *summon tanar'ri*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th)

At will—*charm monster* (DC 24), *detect good, detect thoughts* (DC 22), *ethereal jaunt* (self plus 50 pounds of objects), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects)

*5-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 31, Dex 16, Con 22, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 30

SQ unholy grace

Feats Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip dagger), Improved Critical (whip dagger), Improved Toughness (+1 hp/HD), Improved Trip, Power Attack

Skills Bluff +33, Concentration +29, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +43 (+45 acting), Hide +18, Intimidate +33, Knowledge (the planes) +25, Listen +33, Move Silently +26, Spot +33, Tumble +14

Possessions *+2 flaming burst whip dagger*

Change Shape (Su) A succubus can assume the form of any Small or Medium humanoid.

Unholy Grace (Su) As the favored of Malcanthet, a warden is enveloped in an aura of otherworldly grace. She gains a profane bonus to her Armor Class equal to her Charisma bonus as long as she's not wearing armor.

Tactics: If any of the succubi are brought below 30 hit points, they become ethereal and head south to area 37 to alert Mozul—the PCs may encounter them again in that area.

22. Entrance to Undeath

The walls, floor, and even the domed ceiling of this chamber are plastered with hundreds upon hundreds of bones

The secret door in the west wall of this chamber can be found with a DC 35 Search check. To open the door, one need merely to pull upon a key skull that acts as a trigger—upon activation, the bones in the wall here scuttle and

scurry apart to reveal a natural cavern beyond.

23. Caverns of the Legion (EL 19)

The air in these rough caverns reeks of decay and ruin. A thick, rancid layer of rot cakes the walls, floor, and even ceiling here. Worse, the corruption seems to writhe and move as if in unholy memory of life. A ten-foot-high heap of bones lies to the south.

Afelbain Maure used these caverns to house his undead legion. The walls and floor of this place are made of foul undead flesh, but are actually rather harmless, serving a role similar to that of wall hangings and carpet. The shuddersome mass does not impede movement.

Creatures: Afelbain's legion was once so vast that the undead army filled this entire network of caves. Today, the legion is a shadow of its original size, yet there are still an intimidating number of undead present. Though there is little here of value to adventurers, the destruction of these last monstrous minions is itself an honorable goal for good-aligned heroes. The undead remain listless until they sense intruders, at which time they mobilize and attack in waves. The undead pursue PCs throughout the dungeon, although if they still live, the succubi in area **21** quickly come to fight the undead as well, perhaps becoming momentary allies with the PCs. Of course, once the last undead is destroyed, the succubi are quick to turn against the PCs.

Area **23A** contains 14 mohrgs. Area **23B** contains 6 bodaks and 8 mohrgs. Area **23C** is the lair of the leader of the undead—an ancient nightwing. Area **23D** contains the majority of the remaining undead; 14 mohrgs and 20 wights.

Nightwing: hp 144; *Monster Manual* 197.

Mohrgs (36): hp 91; *Monster Manual* 189.

Bodaks (6): hp 58; *Monster Manual* 28.

Wights (20): hp 26 each; *Monster Manual* 255.

24. Chamber of Ancient Vows

This chamber appears empty save for a ten-foot-diameter red circle inset into the central portion of its black marble floor.

This was one of the family's most treasured rooms, a place where vows to their divine and demonic masters (and other strange and powerful creatures) were sealed. All vows sworn here were recorded in the *Book of Vows* once kept in area **25**.

25. Old Library

This spacious library lies in utter ruin. The contents of the room seem to have been obliterated by fire, and many of the walls appear pulverized in places, indicating that a most powerful force was unleashed upon the stored knowledge herein.

Once one of the main libraries for the Maure family, Malcanthet discovered it during her assault on the castle. She tore the room apart in her frantic search for a specific tome, leaving the place in

ruins when she couldn't find it. Close examination reveals damage as if from a tremendously sharp slashing instrument—the razored chains of the Succubus Queen's scourge bit deeply into the stone walls. The tome Malcanthet was searching for—the *Book of Vows*—is hidden somewhere on the dungeon levels below the Greater Halls.

26. Magic Repository

The walls of this room are lined with empty wooden racks and cases. Mostly empty, at least. A bejeweled longsword lies on the ground to the west, and what appears to be a fine suit of chainmail armor is draped over a partially shattered barrel to the north.

Treasure: Once a magical repository, the powerful weapons and items stored here were gathered by the Maures long ago to defend the castle from attack. Only a few baubles remain. The bejeweled longsword is in fact a *+3 defending longsword*, while the chainmail is *+3 mithral chainmail*. A DC 30 Search check uncovers a *wand of lightning bolt* (20 charges) under a pile of splintered shelves. With a DC 40 check, an empty *minor ring of spell storing* can be discovered wedged in a crack in the western wall near the floor.

27. Opening the Way

This series of four rooms represents the second stage of the ritual required to open the door to area **30**. The westernmost door leading to area **27A** is made of steel and has an inscription of an open hand on it. The doors and walls of all four of these rooms are shielded by a permanent *wall of force* (caster level 22nd) that resists *disintegrate* spells as if they possessed SR 32. Further, the "doors" themselves are all locked with incredible locks (Open Lock DC 50), so even if antimagic is employed to bypass these wards, the PCs still face a difficult entry.

The simplest method of entering these rooms is to visit the four ritual wells (areas **7**, **14**, **17**, and **35**). Once a character does so, he can open the door to **27A** by touching the inscribed palm on its surface. Once opened, these doors remain open for 1 hour before closing and locking again.

Within each room waits another pool, identical to those the PCs encountered in the earlier ritual pool areas. By progressing through the four pools here, dipping their feet in each one, the PCs can complete the second part of this ritual. These pools, unlike those in the first part of the ritual, do not grant magical healing. Once at least one PC reaches area **27D** and completes the ritual, a loud grating sound echoes through the dungeon as the door to area **30** grinds open.

28. The Teleporting Wall

A five-foot-thick wall of stone blocks off sections of this hallway, moving from points **A–D** via teleportation. It begins at location **A**. If approached within 10 feet, it teleports 1d10 rounds later to a new location along its route; determine which of the three available locations it moves to randomly.

This wall is actually malfunctioning—the wall's original purpose was to seal off any entry to areas **29–31**. The Maures could control its position with command words.

If the wall appears in a square occupied by a creature, that creature can make a DC 20 Reflex save to dodge into a safe square, otherwise he becomes encased in rock and suffers 20d6 points of damage and may suffocate. If the wall teleports away, it leaves behind any creatures it encased.

29. Star Portal

The door to this chamber is sealed within a field of force, similar to the fields encasing area **27** above. If the first part of the Pool Ritual is performed (in areas **7**, **14**, **17**, and **35**), the field of force fades for 24 hours and the door can be opened with ease.

A circular slab of granite sits on the floor of this otherwise empty room. The granite bears a faintly glowing inscription of an eight-pointed star on its surface.

The eight-pointed star is in fact a portal. Anyone who steps upon it is immediately teleported to a matching platform in area **32**.

30. The Lair of Gigantus (EL 20)

This entire chamber (including the northern door) is encased in a sheath of force identical to that encasing area **27**; the easiest method to open the door into this room is to undertake the pool ritual in area **27** (which, in turn, requires its own pool ritual to open).

The walls, floor, and ceiling of this immense room are coated with iron plates, each bearing strange and sinister runes. The plates dance and shimmer now and then with arcs of electricity. The ceiling arches upward to a height of eighty feet. To the far south, a single door provides an additional exit from the vast, empty chamber.

Creature: Once the entrance to Bersteck's main treasury, the wizard placed his greatest and most dangerous guardian here as its protector. This is the very old blue dragon Gigantus, a monstrous creature made even more deadly by the potent plates of magical iron armor riveted directly onto his flesh. Gigantus is a tragic figure, a once-proud dragon whose memories and personality have been scoured from his brain by Bersteck's insidious alchemy. The dragon knows nothing more than an unwavering loyalty to Bersteck now, even though the wizard hasn't visited this chamber in centuries. If the door to the north is opened in the proper way (via the pool ritual), Gigantus assumes his master has returned and eagerly awaits his arrival—when he sees the PCs, he grows suspicious and demands to know what happened to Bersteck. A canny party can possibly convince Gigantus that they are Bersteck's agents, and may even be able to learn something of this dungeon level if they can change the dragon's initial attitude of hostile to helpful.

Gigantus **CR 20**

Male very old elite blue dragon
LE Huge dragon (earth)
Monster Manual 73

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses; Listen +37, Spot +37
Aura frightful presence (270 ft., Will DC 30)
Languages Draconic

AC 44, touch 9, flat-footed 43
hp 435 (30 HD); **DR** 15/magic

Immune 4th-level or lower spells, electricity, sleep, paralysis
SR 25
Fort +25, **Ref** +18, **Will** +21

Spd 40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)
Melee* bite +31 (3d8+23/19–20) and
2 claws +29 (2d6+16) and
2 wings +29 (1d8+16) and
tail slap +29 (2d6+29)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)
Base Atk +30; **Grp** +51
Atk Options Cleave, Flyby Attack, Power Attack
Special Actions breath weapon (100 ft. line, 18d8 electricity, Ref DC 33 half), crush (Ref DC 33 avoids, 4d6+19), sound imitation (DC 30)
Spells Known (CL 11th, +29 ranged touch)
5th (5/day)—*teleport*, *wall of force*
4th (7/day)—*enervation*, *unholy blight* (DC 19), *wall of fire*
3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *lightning bolt* (DC 19), *major image* (DC 18), *slow* (DC 18)
2nd (7/day)—*flaming sphere* (DC 18), *glitterdust* (DC 17), *scorching ray*, *shatter* (DC 18), *Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 17)
1st (8/day)—*charm person* (DC 16), *grease* (DC 16), *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *reduce person* (DC 16)
0 (6/day)—*acid splash*, *dancing lights*, *flare* (DC 16), *ghost sound* (DC 15), *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)
3/day—*create/destroy water*, *ventriloquism*
1/day—*hallucinatory terrain* (DC 19)
*10-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 37, Dex 13, Con 27, Int 16, Wis 19, Cha 20
Feats Cleave, Empower Spell, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (bite), Multiattack, Power Attack, Spell Focus (evocation)
Skills Bluff +38, Concentration +41, Hide +26, Knowledge (arcana) +36, Listen +37, Sense Motive +37, Spellcraft +38, Spot +37
Possessions *plates of invulnerability* (see Appendix C), *ring of sustenance*

31. Bersteck's Main Treasury

This room appears to have been a laboratory at one time, as suggested by the tables, racks, and remaining implements such as thuribles, alembics, and the like arrayed neatly atop them. Beyond is a large circular side-room that contains many open and empty chests.

Treasure: Much of the treasure Bersteck Maure once kept here is gone, transported by the wizard in haste to parts unknown as the castle fell under attack long ago. A few baubles remain: a small chest containing 300 pp and 500 gp in gems, a leather pouch containing 500 gp, a sapphire and gold anklet worth 4,000 gp, and a small coffer containing 800 gp and thirty 100 gp pearls. In addition, a small key found here fits the stature in area **2**.

32. Bersteck's Secret Chamber (EL 20)

As with areas **27–31**, this chamber is protected by a sheath of force that prevents entry via tunneling or magic like *passwall*. Further, a permanent *dimensional lock* wards the majority of the chamber, the exceptions being the alcoves to the northeast and southeast and the teleportation portal to the west. Attempts to teleport work in these three areas, but fail elsewhere. The easiest way to enter this room is to use the teleportation pad in area **29**.

The walls of this large chamber are of stone, yet shimmer and sparkle with green energy; only a stone disc bearing a carving of an eight-pointed-star and a pair of ten-foot-wide alcoves to the northeast and southeast do not carry this scintillating glow. To the east are three circular risers, steps leading up to a large throne that seems to be made of crystal and mist. The room itself resonates softly with mysterious organ music that seems to come from everywhere at once.

The green energy on the walls is a manifestation of the chamber's *dimensional lock* (CL 22nd). The throne itself is a magical item that sustains anyone seated in it with food, water, and comfort indefinitely—the seated individual even ceases to age as long as he remains. The

throne itself is impervious to harm and cannot be moved from this chamber.

This chamber was created long ago by Bersteck Maure to serve as an entrance to an extraplanar laboratory and workshop; the alcoves to the northeast and southeast still function, and any creature stepping into them is whisked away to this laboratory (see the sidebar).

Creature: One being guards this room—a magical duplicate of Bersteck Maure himself. Similar in some ways to a simulacrum or clone, this duplicate remains seated on the throne, waiting to greet the true Bersteck upon his return, or to destroy any intruders that arrive in the interim.

This alchemical creation may be Bersteck's masterpiece, an artificial lifeform granted intelligence harvested from his own mind and memories. While created from his own flesh and soul, the false Bersteck does not resemble its creator—it appears as a six-foot-tall blonde man with brown eyes. It has limited memories relating to Bersteck's actual knowledge, and has spent the last several hundred years trying (in vain) to make sense of the half-memories and snippets of lore trapped in its mind. It knows of the laboratory entrances, how to use its spells, and about the magical implements it wields, but very little else. It possesses the intelligence to know it could be something more, yet lacks the capacity to seek escape from its atrophied existence. It is a guardian of a territory demarked by Bersteck prior to his departure, and no more.

False Bersteck **CR 20**

Male human sorcerer 9/fighter 1/eldritch knight 10

LE Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1

Languages Common

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19; Dodge, Mobility

hp 164 (178 with *false life*, 20 HD)

Immune mind-affecting

Fort +18, **Ref** +7, **Will** +8

Weakness vulnerable to cold

Spd 30 ft.

Melee *Bersteck's hand* +24/+19/+14 (1d6+10/19–20)

Ranged *Bersteck's hand* +20 (1d6+8/19–20)

Base Atk +15; **Grp** +19

Atk Options Spring Attack

Spells Known (CL 18th, 15% spell failure, +16 ranged touch)

9th (3/day)—*Heward's uplift ment* (DC 24)

8th (5/day, 1 remaining)—*horrid wilting* (DC 23), *mind blank* (already cast once today)

7th (6/day)—*finger of death* (DC 22), *insanity* (DC 22), *prismatic spray* (DC 22)

6th (6/day)—*chain lightning* (DC 21), *greater dispel magic*, *repulsion* (DC 21)

5th (7/day)—*dominate person* (DC 20), *feeblemind* (DC 20), *telekinesis*, *wall of force*

4th (7/day)—*enervation*, *fear* (DC 19), *mass reduce person* (DC 19), *stoneskin*

3rd (7/day)—*fireball* (DC 18), *haste*, *tongues*, *vampiric touch*

2nd (7/day, 5 remaining)—*glitterdust* (DC 17), *false life* (already cast once today), *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *resist energy*

1st (8/day)—*expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*, *true strike*

0 (6/day)—*acid splash*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *resistance*

Abilities Str 18, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 20

SQ summon familiar (currently none)

Feats Dodge, Eschew Materials, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (trident), Improved Initiative , Improved Toughness (+1 hp/HD), Mobility, Spring Attack, Still Spell, Weapon Focus (trident)

Skills Concentration +26, Craft (alchemy) +12, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Spellcraft +24

Possessions *rune armor*, *Bersteck's hand*, *belt of giant strength +6*, *amulet of health +4*, 2 doses of *osyluth salve*, 4 doses of diamond dust (250 gp each)

Vulnerable to Cold (Ex) The false Bersteck's alchemical nature left it with one notable weakness—a vulnerability to cold. It takes 150% normal damage from cold attacks.

Tactics: The false Bersteck uses a new spell and owns several unique and powerful magic artifacts; make sure to study the appropriate entries in Appendixes B and C before running this combat. His first acts in combat are to cast *Heward's uplift ment* (a swift action), activate his shield rune (gaining a +4 deflection bonus to AC and displacement, a free action), and cast *haste* on himself. On the second round, he activates his wing rune (a free action that grants him a 60-ft. fly speed) and a stilled *horrid wilting*. If the PCs seem to be on the defensive after this, he closes to engage them one at a time in melee, otherwise he continues with stilled spells each round (remember that spells with only verbal components do not suffer from his 15% spell failure chance from armor). The false Bersteck fights to the death, but cannot pursue enemies from this room.

33. Chamber of the Murdering Flame (EL 17)

An inlay depicting a coiling whip-like flame decorates the polished stone floor of this otherwise empty room.

Bersteck's Workshop

Entering the alcoves north and south of the throne in area **32** whisks a character into an extradimensional chamber—Bersteck's former laboratory. This is an expansive room that at one time must have been a grand achievement, but is now in ruins. Tables, glassware, and a wide variety of other items are crushed, burnt, or dissolved. A DC 30 search of these ruins nevertheless uncovers a few items of interest: a scroll of *Heward's upliftment* in a gem-encrusted scroll tube worth 2,000 gp, an alembic containing 4 doses of *osyluth salve*, a piece of parchement containing a short message (see Handout #1), and a tattered journal in which only a few lines of text remain legible (see Handout #2).

Any lawful creature that enters this room must make a DC 34 Will save. Failure indicates a sudden upwelling of treacherous murder in his soul as the influence of Pyremius, god of fire, poison, and murder, overcomes him. The character becomes shrouded in fire, and for 2d4 rounds, this character mercilessly assaults anyone not obviously a minion or worshiper of Pyremius. The character's attacks deal +1d6 fire damage, and he gains immunity to fire for the duration of his frenzy. This effect cannot be removed with *dispel magic*, but *dispel evil* ends the effect. An affected creature has no memory of his murderous frenzy when he recovers. The fell magic of this chamber can only drive one lawful creature to fiery murder per day.

34. Shrine to Pyremius

An eight-foot-tall red marble statue of a scowling and hideously ugly bald man dominates this circular room. The statue glowers down at a shallow wooden crate at its feet, his hands reaching for it as if to claim its contents. To either side of the crate are silver basins and hand cloths.

This is a shrine to Pyremius—those who observed his portrait at area **8E** may recognize the god of fire, poison, and murder, although this representation of the god is without his trademark longsword and whip. A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check allows a character to note this unusual variation on the classic representation of the hateful deity.

If a longsword and a whip are placed before the statue or in the wooden crate, a rumbling sigh shudders through the room as a secret door in the western wall slides open. The weapons placed in the crate both gain the *flaming burst* weapon enhancement for 12 hours (gaining a +1 enhancement bonus as well if they were not magical). The secret door remains open for this same amount of time, during which no further offerings of longswords or whips to the statue elicit any response.

The secret door is remarkably difficult to find—it takes a DC 45 Search check to notice it. Even then, the door resists being opened unless the ritual described above is performed. A *knock* spell can open the door, as can bashing it apart.

35. Fourth Ritual Well

A low stone well filled with sparkling water sits at the end of the passageway. Carved into the wall to the right is a symbol of a foot.

This room is identical to area **7**, save that the pool bestows a *heal* (CL 22nd). This is part two of the ritual required to open the magic door at area **27**.

36. Secret Preparation Room

This appears to have been a room where preparations were made for undertaking magical rites. The walls are frescoed with various pictures of nondescript human figures standing in pentagrams, questioning infernal creatures, or otherwise communicating or commanding through hand gestures, raised wands, or genuflections. The southern section of the room seems to have been converted into some sort of sleeping area.

Malcanthet's minion Mozul sometimes sleeps in this room, although he spends the majority of his time in area **37**. There is nothing of value in this chamber.

"By using the Crystals of Tooth while upon the current, I discovered a possible future problem generating from one named III, who is about investigating the three origin temples. If we have not attained 'order' by then, have her assassinated."

HANDOUT #1

37. Old Summoning Chambers (EL 19–21)

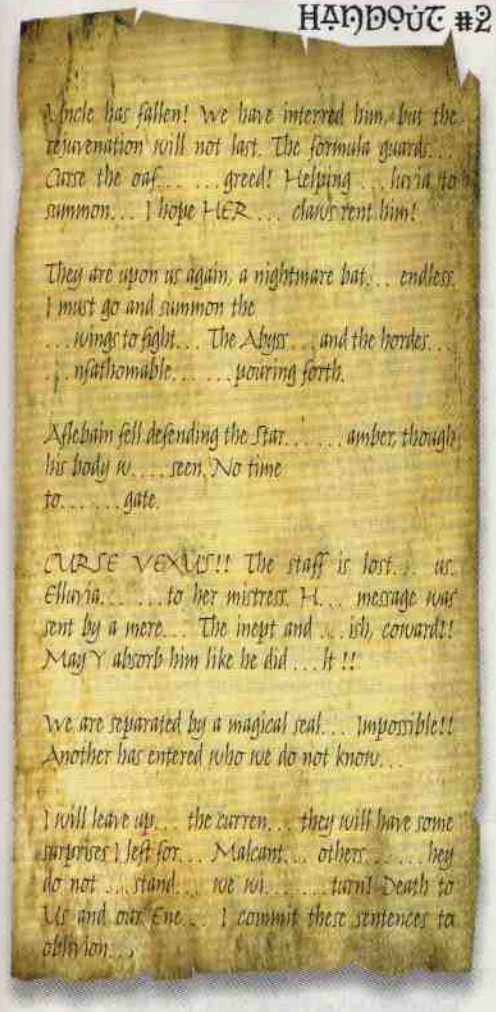
The eastern door is protected by a *stone of alarm* placed there by Mozul; anyone who touches the door without speaking the command phrase, "Death to the enemies of Malcanthet," causes the alarm to emit a piercing screech that immediately alerts Mozul. The secret door in the southwest corner of the room, which remains unknown to Mozul, is not alarmed. The door itself is locked (DC 30 Open Lock), but not otherwise trapped.

The polished stone floor of this room bears nine inscribed circles, each one different than the last. Each circle bears intricate runes around the outer circumference, and a twisting tangle of lines within. Shelves line the walls of the room, filled with hundreds of ancient texts.

This chamber was utilized by the Maures to summon and bind creatures and essences from the outer planes. The summoning circles on the floor once bore powerful magic, but they have faded over the centuries.

The books on the walls cover a wide range of subjects relating to the planes of existence. There are 700 books in all, and they grant a +6 circumstance bonus to Knowledge (the planes) checks made when they are used as references.

Creature: The current occupant of this chamber is an androgynously handsome human man named Mozul. A sometimes-plaything of Malcanthet, the Queen of Succubi, Mozul was sent to the Greater Halls several years ago to watch over the dungeon after his mistress determined that an important event was soon to occur in the region. Mozul is unsure what this event will be, and is more than a little frustrated at the assignment, as he feels


HANDOUT #2
Uncle has fallen! We have interred him, but the rejuvenation will not last. The formula guards... Curse the oaf... ...greed! Helping ... luvia to summon... I hope HER ... claws rent him!
They are upon us again, a nightmare bat... endless. I must go and summon the ...wings to fight... The Abyss... and the hordes... ...nfathomable... ...pouring forth.
Aflebaim fell defending the Star... ...amber, though his body w... ...seen. No time to... ...gate.
CURSE VEXUS!! The staff is lost... us. Ellavia... ...to her mistress. H... message was sent by a mere... The inept and ...ish, coward!! May Y absorb him like he did ...It !!
We are separated by a magical seal... Impossible!! Another has entered who we do not know...
I will leave up... the curren... they will have some surprises I left for... Malcant... others... ... hey do not ...stand... we wi... ...turn! Death to Us and our Ene... I commit these sentences to oblivion...

it to be beneath one of his stature in Malcanthet's clergy. He's spent the majority of his stay in the Greater Halls studying the books in this chamber, and has grown obsessed with the Maures and the castle's history.

If alerted to approaching intruders by the *stone of alarm*, Mozul uses his *wand of channeling* on the door to peer out into the hall and accost the intruders. He demands to know their purpose in the dungeon through the wooden duplicate face his wand creates on the door, and if the answers aren't satisfactory, he begins casting his offensive spells on the intruders through the link.

Mozul **CR 19**

Male human cleric 19

CE Medium humanoid

Init +6; **Senses** Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Abyssal, Common, Elven

AC 26, touch 20, flat-footed 23; 20% miss chance

hp 165 (19 HD)

Fort +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +20

Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft. (*spider climb*)

Melee *Ti'hocht-Ict'ohr's Fang* +24/+19/+14 (1d4+3/19–20)

Base Atk +14; **Grp** +13

Special Actions rebuke undead 7/day (+4, 2d6+23)

Spells Prepared (CL 19th, CL 20th for enchantment spells)

9th—*gate, mass heal, miracle*, quickened *spell resistance, time stop*[D]

8th—quickened *cure critical wounds* (2), *fire storm* (DC 27), *polymorph any object*[D] (DC 27), *unholy aura* (DC 27)

7th—quickened *cure serious wounds* (2), *destruction* (DC 26), *screen*[D], *word of chaos* (2)

6th—*antilife shell, blade barrier* (DC 25), quickened *cure moderate wounds* (2), *heal, mass suggestion*[DE] (DC 27)

5th—quickened *cure light wounds* (2), quickened *divine favor, dominate person*[DE] (DC 26), *flame strike* (DC 24), *greater command*[E] (DC 26), *plane shift* (DC 24), *wall of stone*

4th—*air walk, confusion*[DE] (DC 25), *cure critical wounds, death ward, freedom of movement, sending, spell immunity, tongues*

3rd—*cure serious wounds* (4), *dispel magic, magic vestment* (already cast), *searing light, suggestion*[DE] (DC 24)

2nd—*cure moderate wounds* (3), *enthrall*[E] (DC 23), *hold person*[E] (DC 23), *invisibility*[D], *resist energy, spiritual weapon*

1st—*charm person*[DE] (DC 22), *command*[E] (DC 22), *cure light wounds* (4), *obscuring mist, protection from good, sanctuary* (DC 20)

0—*cure minor wounds* (3), *light* (2), *mending*

D domain spell; **Domains** Temptation, Trickery; **E** enchantment spell

Abilities* Str 8, Dex 22, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 28, Cha 18

SQ spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Feats Abyss-Bound Soul (Malcanthet; +2 bonus on saves vs. good spells, cast enchantment spells at +1 caster level), Craft Wondrous Item, Evil Brand (+2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks against evil creatures), Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (enchantment), Thrall to Demon (1/day gain +1 to any roll while performing an evil act), Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +26, Concentration +26, Diplomacy +6, Jump +29, Knowledge (the planes) +18

Possessions *Ti'hocht-Ict'ohr's Fang, periapt of Wisdom +6, minor cloak of displacement, gloves of Dexterity +6, ring of protection +3, ring of force shield, crystal succubus skull*

*Includes +4 inherent bonuses to Dexterity, Constitution, Wisdom, and Charisma

Temptation Domain This domain grants Mozul a +2 competence bonus on Charisma-based checks opposed by female creatures, and the save DC for any mind-affecting spells he uses against females increases by 1.

Tactics: As soon as it appears that the intruders are going to make it into this room, Mozul casts *sending* to call for help from the succubi wardens in area **21**. If they live, they teleport into this room to aid him. His first act in any combat is to cast *time stop*; he uses these rounds to cast defensive spells (*unholy aura, antilife shell, death ward, freedom of movement,* and *air walk*), casting quickened *spell resistance* as the spell ends. He uses *Ti'hocht-Ict'ohr's Fang* to summon several aranea to keep the PCs at range. Each round, he uses a quickened cure spell as appropriate to heal any damage he's taken. If hard pressed, he uses *gate* to call for aid from Malcanthet—the type of aid that arrives is left to you. If the PCs are having a rough time in the fight, Malcanthet doesn't feel they're worth much trouble and sends Mozul 1d6 succubi. If, on the other hand, the PCs don't seem to be having much trouble at all, she sends one of her wardens (see area **21**). She will not travel to Mozul's aid herself—he's not worth that much to her. Mozul has enough experience points to cast *miracle* once, and typically does so to raise slain allies from the dead to continue fighting. If brought to less than 30 hit points, Mozul abandons his post and attempts to *plane shift* to Shendilavri (Malcanthet's realm on the Abyss). If he escapes, he prepares *astral projection* the next day and hunts the PCs down to extract vengeance, possibly repeating this tactic daily until the PCs die or they're forced to track him down on the Abyss to put a stop to his torments forever.

Treasure: The books in this room, if transported to a buyer, are worth 20,000 gp as a lot.

The *crystal succubus skull* Mozul carries is a magical device and scrying implement attuned to Malcanthet's throneroom. Granted to Mozul by the Queen of Succubi herself, the crystal succubus skull allows Mozul to *commune* with Malcanthet once per day. As long as he carries it, some of her unholy grace wards him from harm, granting him a profane bonus to his Armor Class equal to his Charisma bonus. If any other creature touches it with his skin, he suddenly receives a vision as his mind is briefly placed in contact with Malcanthet. In this vision, he views a decadent circular throneroom lined in marble pillars and floored in red and black carpeting. In the center of the room on a circular dais sits a throne of adamantine blades and velvet cushions, and upon this throne sits Malcanthet herself. She looks into the character's eyes, smiles, and then raises one clawed hand to terminate the contact. The crystal skull crumbles to ash at this point, and the character gains a permanent +2 profane bonus to his Charisma as some of Malcanthet's grace infuses his flesh. Unfortunately, this boon comes with a price; a permanent –4 penalty to the character's Wisdom score. The character's mind races with confused, capricious, and lustful thoughts now, and eventually his alignment shifts to chaotic. This boon can be resisted with a DC 37 Will saving throw, although if this save is failed the PC does not gain the bonus to Charisma—he only gains the penalty to Wisdom. *Dispel chaos, miracle,* or *wish* can remove this boon and the associated penalty, but doing so angers Malcanthet. She may or may not send a warden to punish the PC at some point in the future.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs seek the *osyluth salve* recipe, they can find it in Bersteck's Workshop written on the back of Handout #1 (the main ingredients are osyluth fingers and the heart blood of a vampire, but the process of creating this minor artifact should be an adventure in and of itself). The *crystal succubus skull* resides with Mozul, of course, but what effect might its influence have on the noble if the PCs make good on their promise to deliver it to him?

APPENDIX A: NEW MONSTER

Soul Demon

This terrifying creature has a skull-like head that seems to be made of glass. Hellish red flame burns inside its skull, and its fanged jaws are agape in a howl. Its humanoid body is skeletally thin and partially transparent, and its long legs and arms end in spindly talons.

Soul Demon **CR 14**

Always CE Medium outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *see invisibility*; Listen +23, Spot +23

Languages Abyssal, Common

AC 30, touch 28, flat-footed 19; 50% miss chance

hp 203 (14 HD); **DR** 10/good and bludgeoning

Immune death, disease, energy drain, mind-affecting, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning

Resist cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 22

Fort +19, **Ref** +20, **Will** +15

Weakness vulnerable to silver, vulnerable to turning

Spd fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee 2 claws +25 (1d6+2 plus inflame soul) and bite +20 (1d8+1 plus inflame soul)

Ranged *eldritch blast* +25 touch (7d6)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +14; **Grp** +16

Special Actions Orcus's Ire +30 melee (2d8+7/18–20/×4 plus stun)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 32, Con 30, Int 17, Wis 22, Cha 25

SQ partial incorporeality, rebuke divinity

Feats Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse

Skills Escape Artist +28, Hide +28, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (religion) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +20, Listen +23, Move Silently +28, Search +20, Sense Motive +23, Spot +23, Tumble +28

Environment Infinite Layers of the Abyss

Organization Solitary, pair, or haunt (3–8)

Treasure none

Advancement 15–24 HD (Medium), 25–42 HD (Large)

***Eldritch Blast* (Sp)** A soul demon can channel a ray of energy into an eldritch blast as if it were a warlock of level equal to its Hit Dice. An eldritch blast is a 60-foot-long ray that resolves as a ranged touch attack and inflicts 7d6 damage on a hit. This blast is the equivalent of a 7th-level spell, and can be resisted with spell resistance (the soul demon's effective caster level equals its Hit Dice). The damage inflicted by an eldritch blast bypasses all forms of energy resistance and damage reduction, but deals only half damage to objects.

Inflame Soul (Su) Whenever a soul demon damages a good creature with its claws or bite, it discharges a fragment of its foul spiritual force as a blast of black flame. This inflicts an additional 2d6 points of damage from negative energy. Additionally, the creature struck must make a DC 24 Will save or be *confused* (as the spell) for 2d6 rounds. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Orcus's Ire (Su) Once every 1d4 rounds as a free action, a soul demon may draw upon Orcus's ire. When it does so, the soul demon's skull-like head turns a blood red color and sprouts large curved horns, granting it an additional melee attack for that round. This attack is made at the demon's highest attack bonus, and it receives a +5 profane bonus on this attack roll as well. If it hits, it inflicts 2d8 + its Charisma modifier points of damage, threatening a critical hit on 18–20 and inflicting ×4 damage on a successful critical hit. In addition, anyone hit by Orcus's ire is stunned for 1 round.

Partial Incorporeality (Su) A soul demon's body fades in and out of solid state; only its head and its talons are continuously solid. Any weapon or ray that strikes a soul demon has a 50% chance to actually miss the creature as a result. Unlike the case with truly incorporeal creatures, area effect spells and effects do not suffer this miss chance. A soul demon cannot pass through solid objects. It receives its Charisma modifier as a bonus to its armor class.

Vulnerable to Silver (Ex) A soul demon takes +1d6 points of damage when it is struck by a silver weapon.

Vulnerable to Turning (Ex) A soul demon can be turned or rebuked as if it were an undead creature with turn resistance +4.

Soul demons are formed when the animating life force within a powerful undead creature capable of casting divine magic (typically vampire clerics or divine liches) is stripped from the rotting flesh and infused with raw chaos harvested from Thanatos, the Abyssal realm of Orcus, Prince of Undeath. Rare upon the Material Plane, soul demons bridge the gap between demonic life and Abyssal undeath.

A few rare texts point to a similar being known in ancient times as the "dead man," a villain that sometimes appears in folk tales retold in portions of the western Flanaess (particularly in rural Geoff). These tales tell of a buried man who becomes a vampire, only to be destroyed by vampire slayers and a high priest of Boccob.

With a DC 40 Knowledge (religion or the planes) check, or possibly consultation with knowledgeable sages in the nearby city of Greyhawk, a character remembers hearing of a collection of unusual tales and articles on the Realms Infernal said to be in the keeping of the Mage's Guild. These texts indicate that the legendary soul demons were thought to be created by Orcus to defy the various priesthoods aligned against him. The insinuative information contained in these texts suggests that Orcus originally wished to create a powerful demonic-undead amalgam, resistant to the spells, miracles, and innate clerical holy powers of his hated enemies.

Most believe soul demons to be little more than myths. If the PCs can provide proof of these creatures' existence to any church or scholarly organization with an interest in the lower planes, they may well be able to secure a reward of 20,000 gp or more!

Scaling the Adventure

"The Greater Halls" is designed for a group of four 17th-level characters. To adapt it to a 15th–16th or 18th–19th-level adventure, simply adjust all NPC character levels and the save DCs of traps and other effects in the dungeon by a number equal to that which the average party level deviates from 17. Specific changes to the adventure include:

15th–16th-level characters: Remove one or two soul demons from area 4. Adjust the barghests in area 9 down to 14 or 16 HD specimens, and the ochre bebelith in area 10 down to 20 or 23 HD. Reduce Malcanthet's wardens by 2–4 HD. Remove Gigantus' plates of invulnerability from the adventure, or make him an old dragon.

18th–19th-level characters: Add 2–3 soul demons to area 4. Advance the ochre bebelith by 2–4 HD. Feel free to add some vrocks or even a few high-level liches to area 23. Give Malcanthet's wardens one or two levels in barbarian. Give Gigantus a few more magic powers, such as permanent *haste* or a second head; alternately, you can advance him to an ancient blue dragon.

Appendix B: New Spell

Heward's Uplifement

Transmutation
[Mind-Affecting, Sonic]
Level: Sor/Wiz 9
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 swift action
Range: Personal
Area: 100-ft. radius spread around caster
Duration: 1 round/2 levels
Saving Throw: Will partial (see text)
Spell Resistance: Yes

This powerful spell is initiated with a single word. When this spell is cast, a fantastic sound of organ music issues from the caster. This sound automatically dispels any *silence* spells in the area of effect. The nearly deafening music has no effect on the caster, but to all other creatures in the area the following effects occur:

- All creatures in the area levitate into the air at a speed of 5 feet. A Will saving throw negates the effect, but creatures must make new Will saving throws each round they remain in the area of effect to resist levitation. A levitating creature cannot move, apart from the uncontrollable ascent—even flight is powerless to escape the levitation unless the affected creature has *freedom of movement* in effect. Teleportation can allow escape as well.
- Levitating victims of this spell must make a new Will saving throw at the start of their turn to resist succumbing to a delusional vision of the sky or ceiling above peeling away to reveal the heavens, complete with winged angelic beings that appear to welcome the victims with open arms. A character that succumbs to this powerful illusion can take no actions and is considered helpless.
- Three rounds into the spell's duration, the sound of music is deafening—all creatures in the area (save the caster) are automatically deafened for the remaining duration.

APPENDIX C: MAGIC ITEMS

Bersteek's Hand (Minor Artifact)

This minor artifact appears to be a length of wood with the mummified remains of a barghest's paw affixed to one end. This rod can be used in combat as a +4 *returning trident*. Once per round, the wielder can affect a creature struck in melee with *charm monster* (DC 17) as a free action. When this power is activated, the paw animates and seems to caress the target tenderly.

Bersteck's Hand also allows the use of the following spells, once per day each: *crushing despair* (DC 15), *dimension door*, *misdirection*, and *project image*. The wielder of *Bersteck's Hand* gains the benefit of *pass without trace*, and can *polymorph* into a dire wolf at will.

Strong Conjuration, Enchantment, and Illusion; CL 20th; Weight 6 lb.

Osyluth Salve

This potent magical salve is derived from osyluth devils. The ointment is usually found in a large alembic containing 1d6+2 doses.

Application of a dose of *osyluth salve* is a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity. The salve grants a +4 enhancement bonus to the user's natural armor, a +10 enhancement bonus to his land speed, and SR 21. A single dose of osyluth salve lasts for 1 hour.

Strong Conjuration; CL 15th; Craft Wondrous Item, *planar binding*; Price 5,000 gp per dose.

Plates of Invulnerability (Minor Artifact)

This minor artifact is attuned specifically to Gigantus—the plates will not function for any other creature. These powerful plates of iron are riveted directly onto Gigantus's scaly body, granting him a +6 armor bonus to his AC. In addition, the plates provide complete protection from critical hits and sneak attacks, and render him immune to spells of 4th-level or lower as if he were protected by a *globe of invulnerability*. If he's slain, the plates crumble to powder.

Strong Abjuration; CL 20th.

Rune Armor (Minor Artifact)

This suit of armor appears to have been cobbled together from several different types of armor. The components all appear corroded and old, but on each piece glows an inset rune. Each rune has a unique shape and color, and a corresponding power usable by the armor's occupant. The armor itself functions as a *mithral breastplate* +4.

Activating one of the runes on the armor is a free action, although only one rune may be activated per round. Once activated, a rune's power remains active for 10 rounds. Only two runes can be active at any given time, and each rune can only be activated up to 3 times before they become dormant. A dormant rune can be awakened by applying a specific potion or magic oil that has been enhanced by an obscure alchemical catalyst invented long ago by Bersteck Maure. A dose of rune catalyst is worth 500 gp and has no additional powers of its own—the exact formula for creating this silvery liquid is known to Bersteck Maure and few others. Currently, each rune has only one activation remaining before it needs to be wakened again.

The powers of the runes (and the potion required to awaken them) are as follows.

- **Hoof (Black, *oil of magic vestment*):** Grants DR 10/magic and immunity to bull rush, tripping, and overrun attempts.
- **Claw (Green, *oil of keen edge*):** Any slashing or piercing weapons currently wielded gain keen edge and are poisoned with black lotus extract (Fort DC 20, 3d6 Con/3d6 Con).
- **Sword (Silver, *oil of greater magic weapon*):** Any weapon currently wielded gains a +5 enhancement bonus. The wielder cannot be disarmed.
- **Shield (Blue, *potion of displacement*):** Grants a +4 deflection bonus to AC and *displacement* (50% miss chance).
- **Wing (Gold, *potion of fly*):** Grants a 60 ft. fly speed (perfect).
- **Eye (Red, *potion of arcane sight*):** Protects the wearer from blindness and grants the ability to *see invisibility* and *arcane sight*.

Strong Abjuration, Divination, Illusion, Necromancy, and Transmutation; CL 20th; Weight 15 lb.

Ti'hocht Ict'ohr's Fang (Minor Artifact)

This minor artifact was carved from the fang of a notorious aranea assassin named Ti'hocht-Ict'ohr (CHOT-ikt-or), who was killed more than 400 years ago. Her fang was crafted into this dagger by an unknown necromancer (likely her slayer). It functions as a +4 *dagger of venom*, but has several other potent powers as well.

Once per day, the wielder may use the dagger to create a *web* (as the spell) by slicing the blade through the air (a move equivalent action). Anyone who touches this web must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or be paralyzed as long as he remains in contact with the web plus 1d4 rounds.

The wielder may also summon 2d4 aranea to faithfully serve him for 1 hour by using the fang to cut his own flesh (a standard action that inflicts 1 point of damage to the wielder).

As long as the wielder carries *Ti'hocht-Ict'ohr's Fang*, he may *spider climb* at will, and gains a +30 competence bonus on Jump checks.

Strong Conjuration, Necromancy, and Transmutation; CL 20th; Weight 2 lb.

Wand of Channeling (Minor Artifact)

This simple-looking yew wand is actually a potent channeling device. A *wand of channeling* can have up to 50 charges, but most possess only 2d10 charges when found. By aiming the wand at any nonmagical object within 60 feet, an image of the user's face extrudes from the object. As long as the wielder stays within 60 feet of the object, he may look through this "face," speak through it, hear, or even cast spells through it. Moving outside of this range automatically cancels the magic and causes the face to vanish; otherwise, the magical link between the user and the face lasts for 1 hour. Only one channeling may be in effect at any one time.

Strong Illusion; CL 20th; Weight 1 lb.

Robert J. Kuntz was the co-DM of Gary Gygax's original Greyhawk *campaign. His credits include* Deities & Demigods, Mordenkainen's Fantastic Adventure, Dungeon *#112's "Maure Castle," and issue #124's "Chambers of Antiquities."*

HEALING FOR HIRE

BY JAMES LAFOND SUTTER
BY KYLE HUNTER

The cleric is a vital part of any adventuring party—the glue that holds everyone together (sometimes literally). So what do you do when nobody at your gaming table wants to play one? While other classes can pick up some of the healing slack, and you can always sprinkle *potions of cure light wounds* around like confetti, eventually the party is going to need some major patching up. When that happens, maybe it's time for a mercenary NPC healer to step in and put things back together—for a price. Let the buyer beware, though: each of the following hit point merchants comes complete with his own agenda.

THE HIRELING

A wandering cleric of Fharlanghn, "Happy" Jak Teirel has devoted his life to assisting noble adventurers on their quests (while turning a tidy profit at the same time). Cheerful and honest, Jak waits in the taverns and guild houses where the valiant and crafty gather, then offers to join up with groups lacking an obvious healer. Once on the road, he stays out of combat, positioning himself in the safest part of the marching order and fighting only in self-defense (usually with his *gray bag of tricks*). As soon as his services are required, however, he steps in and provides the party with a bevy of spells and potions—all at one and a half times the going rate. He considers this "convenience charge" only reasonable for his timely, on-demand healing. If threatened by overwhelming force, he acquiesces temporarily, then sneaks away in the night with whatever loot he can carry.

"Happy" Jak Teirel **CR 3**
Male gnome cleric 3 (Fharlanghn)
NG Small humanoid
Init –1; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +6, Spot +4
Languages Common, Dwarven, Gnome

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18
hp 20 (3 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +5 (+7 vs. illusion)

Spd 15 ft.
Melee quarterstaff +3 (1d4)
Ranged light crossbow +2 (1d6/19–20)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** –2
Special actions *protective ward* +3 (once per day), turn undead 5/day (+2, 2d6+5)
Combat Gear *gray bag of tricks*
Spells Prepared (CL 3rd)
2nd—*aid, locate object*[D], *remove paralysis*
1st—*bane* (DC 13), *bless, obscuring mist, sanctuary*[D]
0—*detect magic, light, purify food and drink, read magic*
D domain spell; **Domains:** Protection, Travel
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st)
1/day—*dancing lights, ghost sound* (DC 13), *prestidigitation, speak with animals* (burrowing mammal only, duration 1 minute)

Abilities Str 11, Dex 8, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 14
SQ gnome traits, *freedom of movement* (3 rounds per day)
Feats Alertness, Persuasive
Skills Bluff +4, Craft (alchemy) +3, Concentration +7, Heal +8, Intimidate +4, Listen +6, Spot +4, Survival +8
Possessions combat gear, full plate, light crossbow with 20 bolts, quarterstaff, 10 gp.

THE RELUCTANT HEALER

Everything was running smoothly for Beryxob the babau cleric until a botched assassination attempt against a cleric of Olidammara left him cursed and out of favor with Demogorgon, his patron. Not content with just defeating Beryxob, the Olidammaran cleric decided to appeal to his god's sense of humor. Using a combination of divinely inspired binding and curse spells, he sentenced Beryxob to remain on the Material Plane until such time as he had used his powers to heal 100 non-evil creatures, at their request. (Olidammara, knowing Demogorgon's minimal tolerance for failure, decided to play along and grant Beryxob spells.) While Beryxob initially raged over this injustice, he quickly learned that any damage he dealt to another creature increased his quota by 10. Though still as insulting and bilious as ever, he's come to terms with his sentence, and maintains a small shop on the edge of civilization where adventurers can purchase his grudging healing at fair rates. Only Beryxob knows how long until the curse is broken and he'll be free to vent his spleen on the local populace.

BERYXOB **CR 8**
Male babau cleric 4 (Olidammara)
CE Medium outsider (chaotic, extraplanar, evil, tanar'ri)
Monster Manual 40
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +20, Spot +2
Languages Abyssal, Celestial, Draconic; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18
hp 108 (11 HD); **DR** 10/cold iron or good
Immune electricity, poison
Resist acid 10, cold 10, fire 10 **SR** 14
Fort +14, **Ref** +7, **Will** +11

Spd 30 ft.
Melee 2 claws +15 (1d6+5) and bite +13 (1d6+2)
Base Atk +10; **Grp** +15
Atk Options sneak attack +2d6
Special Actions rebuke undead 5/day (+2, 2d6+6, 4th), *summon tanar'ri*
Combat Gear *potion of lesser restoration* (2), *potion of remove blindness/deafness, potion of remove disease, wand of cure moderate wounds* (38 charges)
Spells Prepared/Known (CL 4th, CL 5th for chaos spells)
2nd—*cure moderate wounds* (2), *invisibility*[D], *remove paralysis*
1st—*cure light wounds* (4), *disguise self*[D]
0—*cure minor wounds* (4), *detect poison*
D domain spell; **Domains:** Chaos, Trickery
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th)
At will—*darkness, dispel magic, see invisibility, greater teleport* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only)

Abilities Str 21, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 16
SQ protective slime
Feats Cleave, Great Cleave, Multiattack, Power Attack
Skills Climb +15, Concentration +13, Disable Device +12, Disguise +13, Escape Artist +11, Heal +10, Hide +19, Listen +20, Move Silently +19, Open Lock +11, Search +20, Sleight of Hand +11, Survival +2 (+4 following tracks), Use Rope +1 (+3 with bindings)
Possessions combat gear

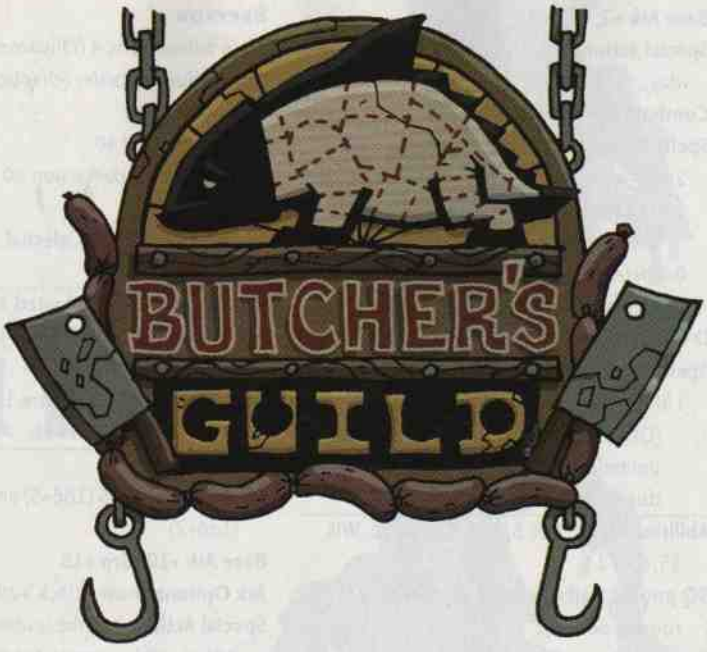
THE SCHOLAR

Thalodius is a cleric with a cause. After years of healing purely through the power of faith, he recently became convinced that doing so is self-indulgent. If secular healers and midwives can set bones and suture wounds, he reasons, isn't doing the same with magic a needless waste of his god's attention and resources? As a result, Thalodius is on a quest to develop new, minimalist healing spells that incorporate conventional medicine. In order to pursue his studies, however, he needs a steady stream of patients. Thalodius is happy to heal PCs for 75% the normal cost, but anyone subjecting themselves to his ministrations runs a 25% risk of taking one point of Constitution damage as the curious cleric makes painful modifications to his handiwork.

THALODIUS **CR 6**
Male human cleric 6 (Pelor)
NG Medium humanoid
Init +5; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Common, Elven, Celestial

AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21
hp 30 (6 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8
Melee masterwork heavy mace +4 (1d8–1)
Ranged light crossbow +5 (1d8/19–20)
Base Atk +4; **Grp** +3
Special actions turn undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+7)
Combat Gear *potion of owl's wisdom*
Spells Prepared/Known (CL 6th, CL 7th for good or healing spells)
3rd—*magic circle against evil*[D], *remove blindness/deafness, remove disease, speak with dead* (DC 16)
2nd—*aid*[D], *gentle repose, hold person* (DC 15), *remove paralysis, spiritual weapon*
1st—*bless, divine favor, obscuring mist, protection from evil*[D], *sanctuary*
0—*detect magic, detect poison, light, mending, read magic*
D domain spell; **Domains:** Good, Healing

Abilities Str 8, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 12
Feats Brew Potion, Improved Initiative, Self-Sufficient, Skill Focus (heal)
Skills Concentration +9, Heal +17, Knowledge (religion) +11, Knowledge (nature) +11, Spellcraft +11, Survival +5
Possessions combat gear, *+1 full plate*, heavy steel shield, masterwork heavy mace, light crossbow with 20 bolts, *goggles of minute seeing*, healer's kit, 150 gp.



MERCHANT MADNESS II

BY ASHAVAN DOYON
BY KYLE HUNTER

City guilds provide endless avenues for adventure. Presented here are five adventure hooks related to distinct city guild situations, all open-ended scenarios that could lead to a brief side-trek or an extended campaign.

CARTOGRAPHERS' INDEPENDENT ALLIANCE

Someone is trying to kill **Albin Zegrast** (LN male halfling expert 8), the secretive leader of the Cartographers' Independent Alliance. Fortunately for Albin, 40 years of studying maps have made him an expert on the city's sewers, and he escaped from his drafting room into the labyrinthine undercity. The local authorities now search for the missing mapmaker, whose sensitive knowledge of city structures could cause a breach in its defenses, but the cartographer remains hidden somewhere deep in the bowels of the city.

Albin is no fool. His position and the respect for his knowledge of the city and the surrounding areas granted him unparalleled access to maps few people have seen and fewer have studied. He knew this would one day make him a target, and now seeks the aid of adventurers, using his old friend **Ida Slickfingers** (LE female human rogue 5), the head of the Merchant Fishmongers' Association,

and her gang of stealthy girls as intermediaries. Albin believes that his enemies learned about a secret map that he hid long ago to keep out of the wrong hands, and he needs someone without an obvious connection (such as the PCs) to retrieve it before whoever is trying to kill him can uncover its resting place.

The identity of Albin's attackers and the nature of the secret map are left to you. Perhaps the map reveals a concealed entrance to a powerful noble's home, with the PCs racing against time to prevent it from being used in an assassination attempt. Alternatively, the map may be the guide to the hidden tomb of the city's founder and the powerful magical weapon that made his name a household word. Regardless, Albin is a unique PC resource, as well as an easy way to provide maps that players would otherwise never gain access to.

ALLIANCE OF TAILORS AND CLOTHIERS

What new trouble stirs, courtesy of **Ethel Upswitch** (CN female human commoner 3)? Disgraced by her shady attempts at influencing the market prices of textiles, Ethel lost her position in the Alliance of Tailors and Clothiers to the tailor **Virago** (CG male human commoner 5), an exotic, foppish clothing designer who swears his fashions will be the talk of the city any moment.

Self-centered but good-natured, Virago believes wholeheartedly in his vision for the guild, but the other members don't all agree. While rich customers have expressed nothing but delight over Virago's outlandish designs, the simple tailors and clothiers of the guild long for the old days. Even shady Ethel is looked upon with nostalgia. She senses an opportunity to return, but instead of trying to peaceably regain control of the guild, Ethel began an elaborate plot that includes the unfortunate demise of Virago and several other rival leaders in the guild. Ethel's sister **Dara Upswitch** (NG female human commoner 2) overheard her sister mumbling to herself and became concerned. She offers to pay the PCs some of her meager earnings from the guild in exchange for their investigation.

LEAGUE OF SKILLED LAMPLIGHTERS

The League of Skilled Lamplighters refuses to leave its guildhall. **Tylos** (LG male human commoner 7), the guild's leader, lost eight members of his guild in the last month. He refuses to risk any more until safety returns to the streets. Young and headstrong, Tylos refuses to budge, demanding the city send someone more capable than the watch to deal with the problem.

Like most of his guild members, Tylos joined as a boy when a kindly master took him in, rescuing him from a rough-and-tumble life on the streets. Now his boys are dying, and he is frustrated beyond measure by city officials whose primary concern is lighted streets for the wealthy. Tylos has good reason to worry, as he was near enough to hear the screams when two of his guild members disappeared a few days ago. Is the culprit a choker? A skulk? A new criminal organization? Fed up and with nowhere else to turn, Tylos pleads with the PCs for help.

SISTERHOOD OF THE KEY

Someone in the city is picking locks, and **Illiara** (CN female half-elf expert 5), Reverend Mother of the cult-like Sisterhood of the Key, is furious. She's convinced that the recent crime wave is an effort by the rival Society of Locksmiths to discredit her organization's work, and refuses to submit to their foul play, contracting the PCs to put a stop to the vile ploy.

Actually, **Geral Umbrage** (LG male human expert 4), the Society's guild master, knows nothing about the strange increase in break-ins. He does acknowledge that someone has been bypassing his best locking mechanisms. That Illiara's guild has suffered the same worries him far more than any imagined feud between the two guilds, which, he assures the characters, exists only in Illiara's twisted mind. He is willing to double whatever Illiara has offered them to investigate.

Is the culprit a new, well-organized thieves' guild trying to make a name for themselves in the city? Perhaps a band of ethereal filchers have somehow been coerced into acting together? With both guilds trying to keep the issue quiet, it's up to the PCs to find out.

ORDER OF THE BUTCHER'S BLOCK

The Order of the Butcher's Block follows the lead of **Abadal the Bald** (N male dwarf warrior 2/commoner 3), and no one in the guild has ever questioned the dwarf's leadership—until now. It seems that Abadal has been supplying exotic meats to several master chefs in the city. Unfortunately, these particular exotic meats once had siblings—intelligent siblings who are none too happy with the fact that their brothers are being served with mashed tubers and salad to local nobles.

Some time ago, Abadal commissioned an adventuring group to procure exotic meats for a renowned local chef. He was looking for shocker lizard, but the meat they returned with was something else. The chef didn't recognize the strange serpentine creatures that smoldered even in death, perhaps because the more humanoid aspects had already been removed. Now a band of tribal flamebrother salamanders has infiltrated the city seeking the people responsible for the deaths of their kin.

The unscrupulous adventurers approach the party out of fear. They claim that rampaging monsters are trying to kill their group, and they are absolutely right—indeed, by the time they risk contacting the party, two of their number have already been killed. Will the PCs uncover the truth, or will the salamander poachers manage to shift the blame to the PCs? Either way, the enraged salamanders are likely to attack first and ask questions later.

Downer

Fool's Errand

After learning that I'm a pawn in an epic contest to crown the God of Gaming, I lost my head and stormed the stronghold of the Blackfinger assassins by myself. I want out of this game ASAP, but I'm obligated to make my delivery. I've carved my way through countless kenkus to claim my prize, but I think my turn is now over.

WHOA.
ZN MEDIUM HUMANOID (ELF), WITNESS MY ASCENSION. I WILL TAKE TOKEN/ZHAOS REACTOR/ULOLOK TO DESTINATION/FINISH LINE/SIGIL. YOU ARE IN ZHECK. DO YOU ZHALLENGE?

Story and art by Kyle Stanley Hunter. Lettering by Sean Glenn. Downer is ©2005 Kyle Stanley Hunter. A Super Unicorn production. www.superunicorn.com

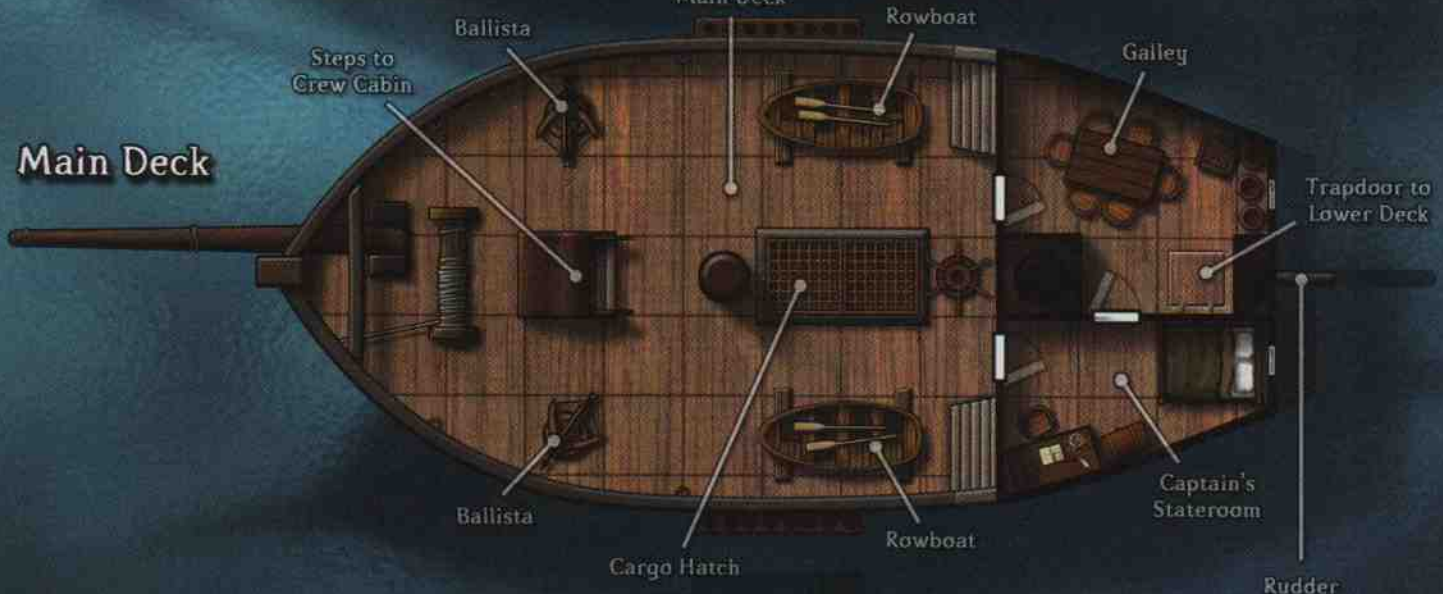
AS A PENALTY FOR REMOVING IT FROM THE TIMELINE, I'M SLOWING YOU DOWN--
-- AND YOU CAN SIT OUT A COUPLE OF TURNS.
YOUR INTERFERENCE WILL NOT WORK. MY SPEED IS IRRELEVANT IF I STOP TIME...
DAMMIT, HE'S GONE. PROBABLY NOT FAR. DOWNER, BE ALERT!
I THINK I KNOW WHERE HE'LL POP BACK.
BANG
SQUAWK!
PING
PANG
LUCKY SHOT, BUT YOU CAN'T HOPE TO HURT HIM.
ACTUALLY, I WASN'T AIMING AT HIM.
NO! IMPOSSIBLE! THE VESSEL HAS BEEN BREACHED!
KLG KRRRSS
ONGAZAAMOOO
TO BE CONTINUED

DARKMAIDEN'S DANCE
Merchant Caravel

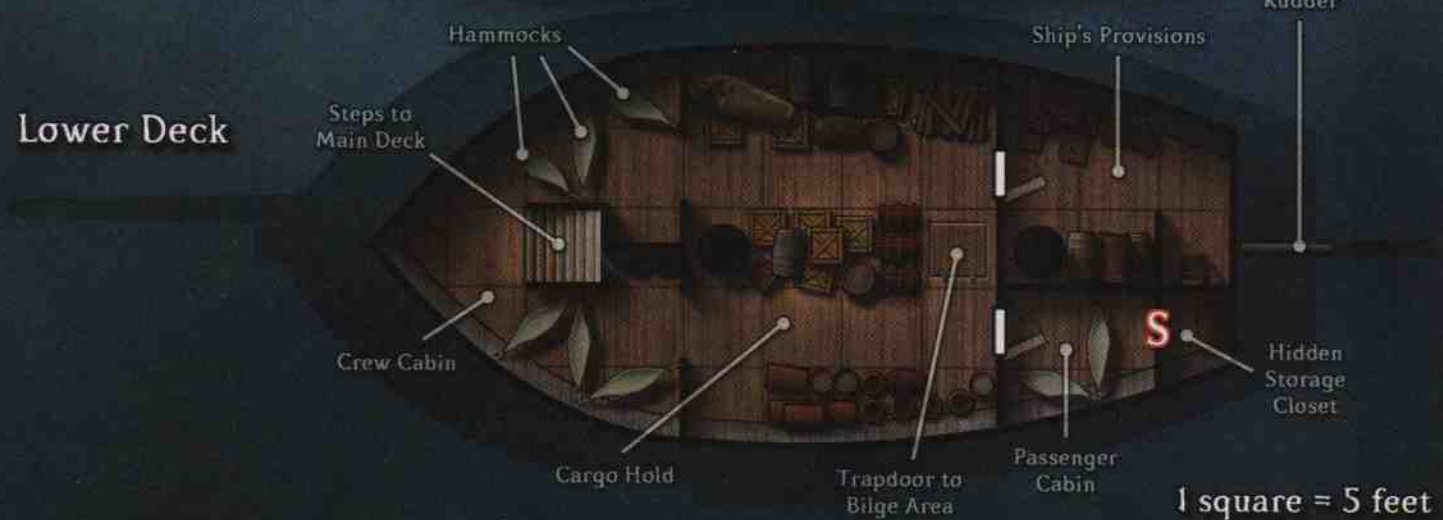
Map of Mystery

Upper Deck & Rigging

Main Deck



Lower Deck

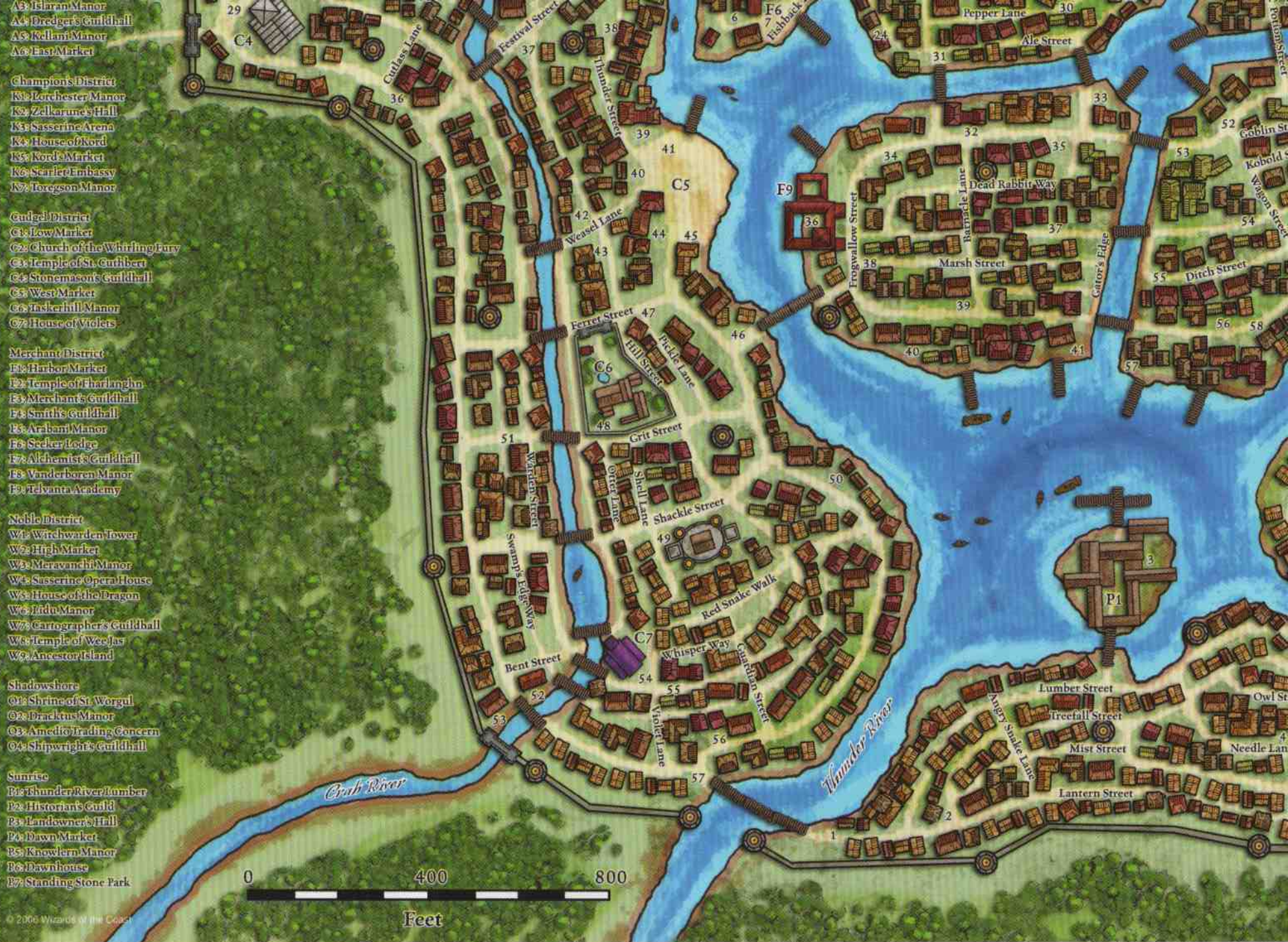


1 square = 5 feet

WEST

Sasserine
N
ne
E
se
S
sw
W
nw
Terakuian's Arch
Watcher's Lane
Westlight Lane
Thunder Lane
16 Lantern Street
Glory Street
Kord's Walk
K1
K2
K3
K4
K5
K6
K7
Zelkatune's Way
Windy Lane
Shelter Road
West Brisk Street
Mansion Street
East Brisk Street
Avenue of Champions
Bloodcobble Way
Cliff Street
Rubble Street
Gull Street
Worgul Street
Critter's Lane
Harbor Way
O1
O2
O3
O4
Lantern Street
C1
C2
C3
Fury Street
Crab Street
Ratcatch Way
Parrot Island
Parrot Street
Main Street
Shard Street
F1
F2
F3
F7
Gold Street
Silver Street
Copper Street
Bronze Street
Relic Street
Mead Street
Festival Street
Azure District
A1 Whaler's Guildhall

Castle Teraknian
Ancestor Island
North Street
Wand Street
Mephit Street
Imp Street
Arcane Street
Witchwarden's Walk
West Wren Way
East Wren Way
Scarlet Street
Boneyard Way
School Street
Lidu Street
Opera Street
Sorcerer's Walk
Magister's Street
Dweomer Lane
Genie Street
Warlock's Run
Spire Street
Azure Street
Crow Street
Fisher's lane
Harpoon Street
Whale Street
Ocean Way
Worm Street
Harbor Street
Rubber's Loop
Fish Rock Road
Puppetmaker's Lane
Hook Street
Stirge Street
Main Street
Vine Street
W1
W2
W3
W4
W5
W6
W7
W8
W9
A1
A2
A3
F5
F8


A3: Islaran Manor
A4: Dredger's Guildhall
A5: Kellani Manor
A6: East Market
Champion's District
K1: Torchester Manor
K2: Zelkarune's Hall
K3: Sasserine Arena
K4: House of Kord
K5: Kord's Market
K6: Scarlet Embassy
K7: Toregson Manor
Cudgel District
C1: Low Market
C2: Church of the Whirling Fury
C3: Temple of St. Cuthbert
C4: Stonemason's Guildhall
C5: West Market
C6: Taskerhill Manor
C7: House of Violets
Merchant District
F1: Harbor Market
F2: Temple of Fharlanghn
F3: Merchant's Guildhall
F4: Smith's Guildhall
F5: Arabani Manor
F6: Seeker Lodge
F7: Alchemist's Guildhall
F8: Vanderboren Manor
F9: Telvanta Academy
Noble District
W1: Witchwarden Tower
W2: High Market
W3: Meravanchi Manor
W4: Sasserine Opera House
W5: House of the Dragon
W6: Tidu Manor
W7: Cartographer's Guildhall
W8: Temple of Wee Jas
W9: Ancestor Island
Shadowshore
O1: Shrine of St. Wergul
O2: Dracktus Manor
O3: Amedio Trading Concern
O4: Shipwright's Guildhall
Sunrise
P1: Thunder River Lumber
P2: Historian's Guild
P3: Landowner's Hall
P4: Dawn Market
P5: Knowlern Manor
P6: Dawnhouse
P7: Standing Stone Park
Cutlass Lane
Festival Street
Thunder Street
Weasel Lane
Ferret Street
Hill Street
Pickle Lane
Grit Street
Warden Street
Otter Lane
Shell Lane
Shackle Street
Swamp's Edge Way
Red Snake Walk
Whisper Way
Guardian Street
Bent Street
Violet Lane
Crab River
Thunder River
Pepper Lane
Ale Street
Fishback
Frogwallow Street
Barnacle Lane
Dead Rabbit Way
Marsh Street
Gator's Edge
Ditch Street
Goblin St
Kobold S
Wagon Street
Lumber Street
Treefull Street
Mist Street
Angry Snake Lane
Lantern Street
Needle Lan
Owl St
C4
C5
C6
C7
F6
F9
P1
0
400
800
Feet
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Traveler's Street
Blue Skink Lane
Red Skink Lane
Star Street
Bastion Street
Dredger's Lane
Toad Lane
Doxy Lane
Bullywug Lane
Brine Street
Eel Street
Churl Street
Drake Street
Spice Street
Shadow Street
Emerald Street
Wall Street
Crown Street
Widow's Walk
Black Sand Street
Dead Dog Alley
Monkey Street
Water Street
Dusk Street
Coral Street
Fish Street
Squid Street
Shark Street
Salmon Street
Pearl Street
Oyster Street
Bay Street
Tapir Street
Bat Lane
Gully Street
Ash Street
Barking Dog Lane
Sunset Street
Sun Walk
East Lane
Landowner's Lane
Willow Way
Stone Street
Trench Street
Song Street
Runt Street
Pebble Street
Obsidian Street
Marble Street
Spice Street
A4
A5
A6
P2
P3
P4
P5
P6
P7
Emerald River

DUNGEON #139

MAP & HANDOUT SUPPLEMENT

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THE SAVAGE TIDE BEGINS!
YOUR NEW CAMPAIGN STARTS RIGHT HERE!
DUNGEON
A NEW ADVENTURE PATH
PIRATES, DEMONS, AND THIEVES ON THE HIGH SEAS
RETURN TO MAMMOTH CASTLE
ZOMBIE PIRATES • YUAN-TI • SOUL DEMONS
THE FORGOTTEN REALMS • DUNWEB • MT. ZOGON

Ben Wooten

THERE IS NO HONOR

by James Jacobs

The Savage Tide Adventure Path debuts as a new band of heroes confronts exotic monsters, undead pirates, and a sinister guild of thieves on the cusp of unleashing a murderous coup. A Savage Tide Adventure Path scenario for 1st-level characters.

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Lavinia

Ben Wooten

Handout #1

Greetings, and I trust this missive finds you in good health!

My name is Lavinia Vanderboren, and I humbly request your attendance at dinner at my estate on Festival Street and Blue Skink Lane tomorrow evening. I think that I can present you with an opportunity uniquely suited to your skills. Please inform the carrier of this letter of your response to this invitation, and I hope to be speaking to you soon!

Handout #2

Chimera looks to sunrise

Cyclops looks to sunset

Medusa looks to sunrise

Umber Hulk looks to sunset

Basilisk looks to sunrise

Vanthus

Ben Wooten

Soller Vark

Ben Wooten

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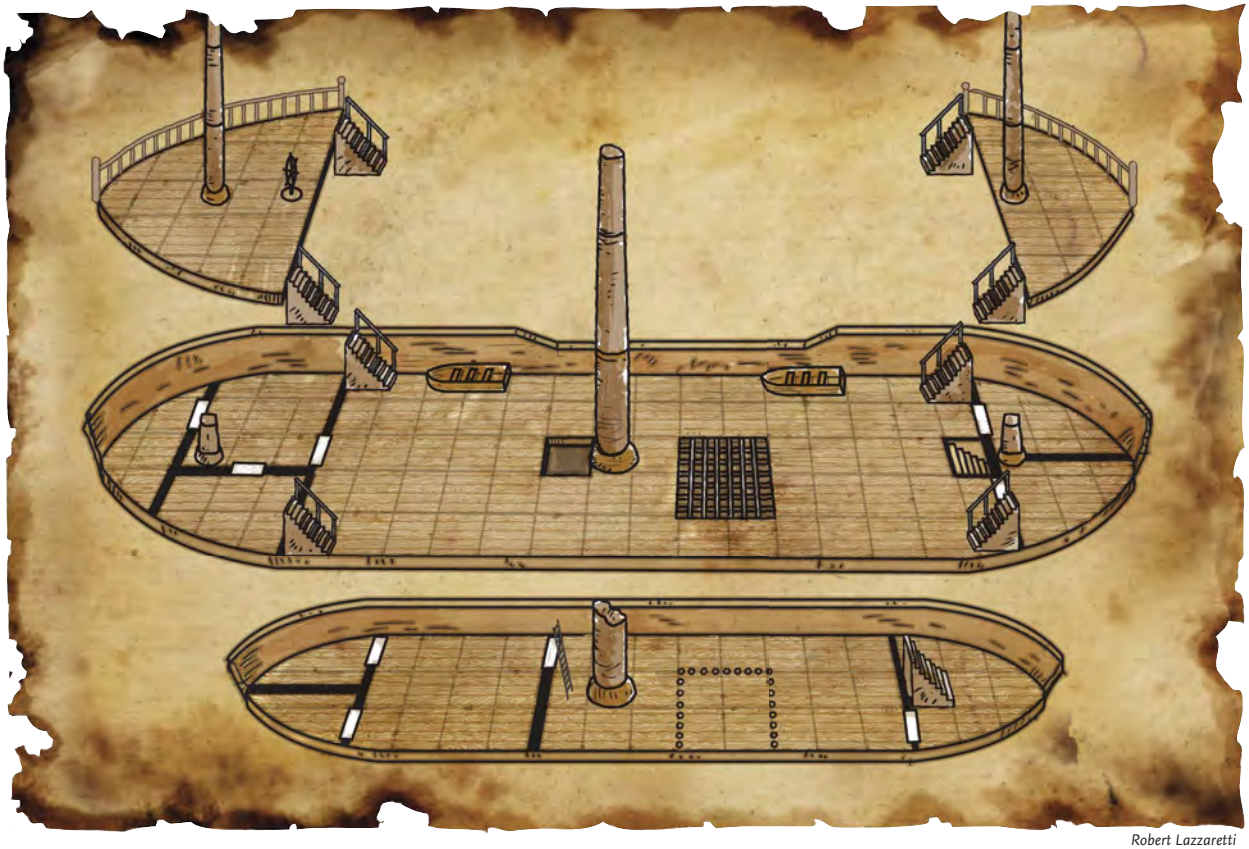

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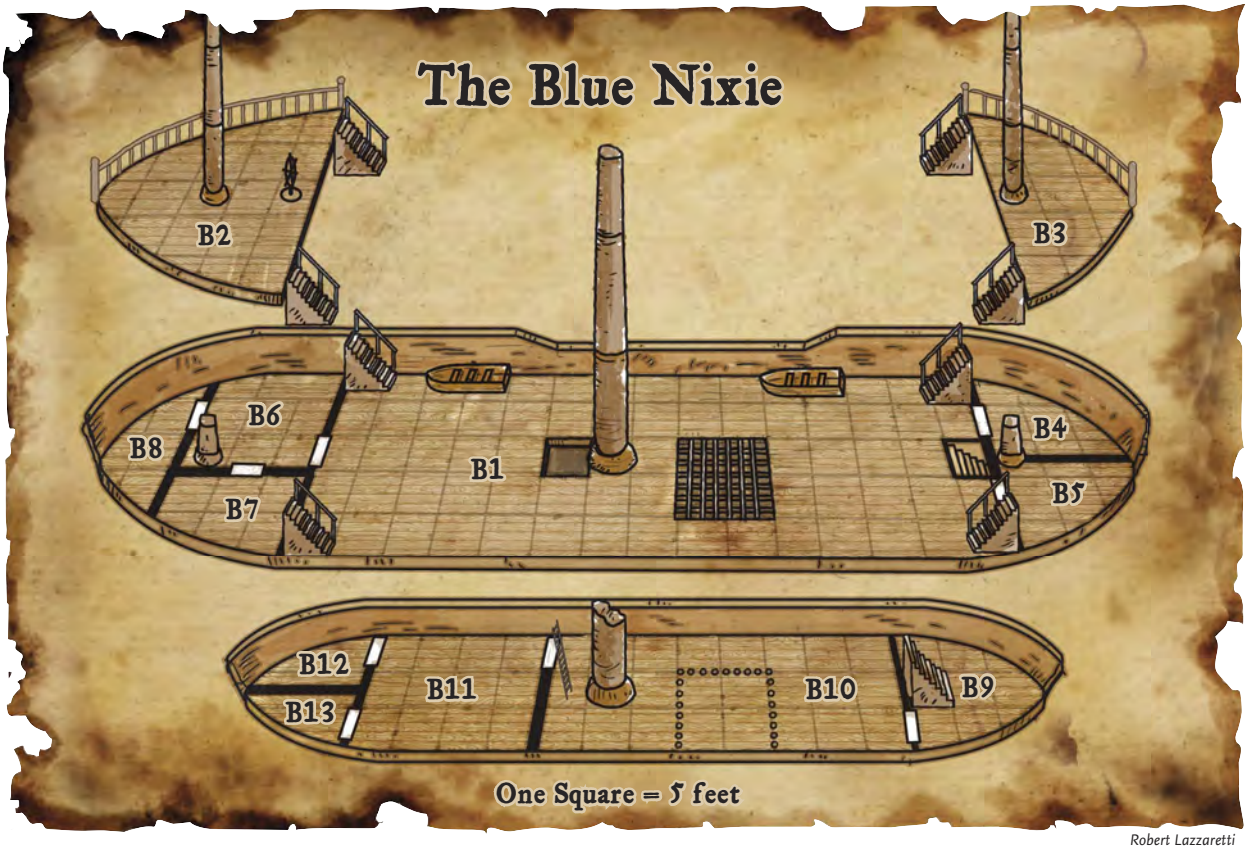

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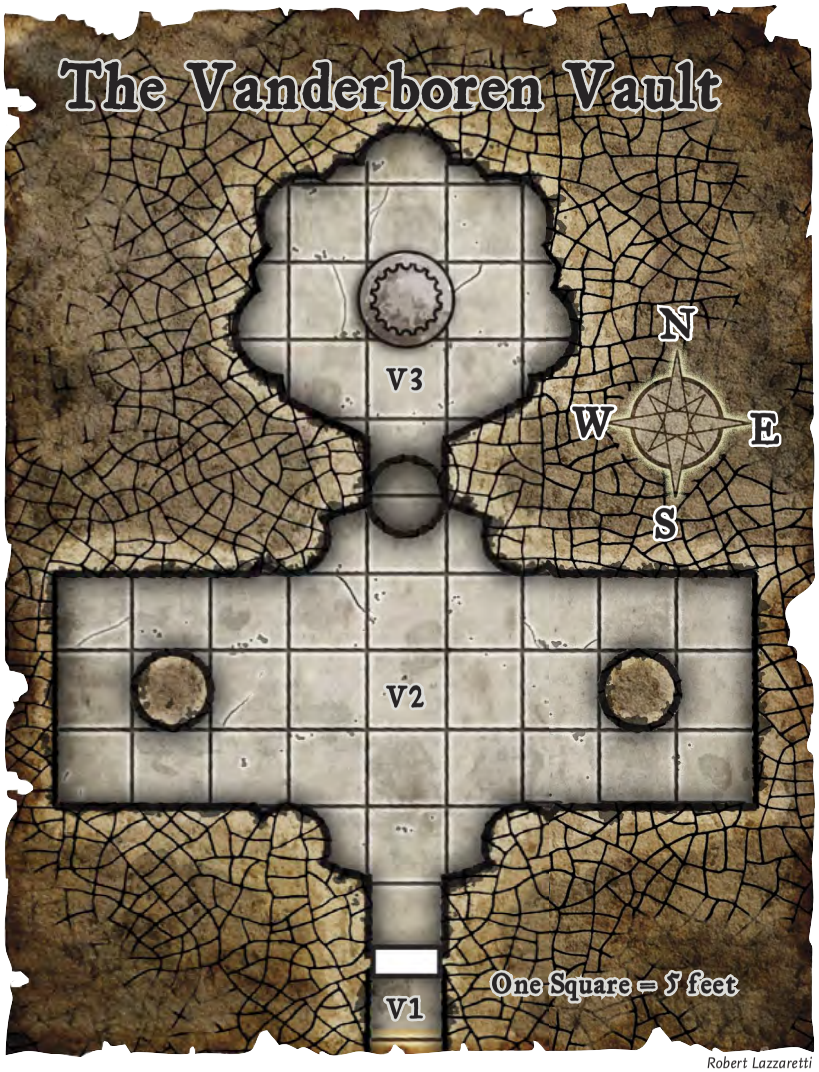

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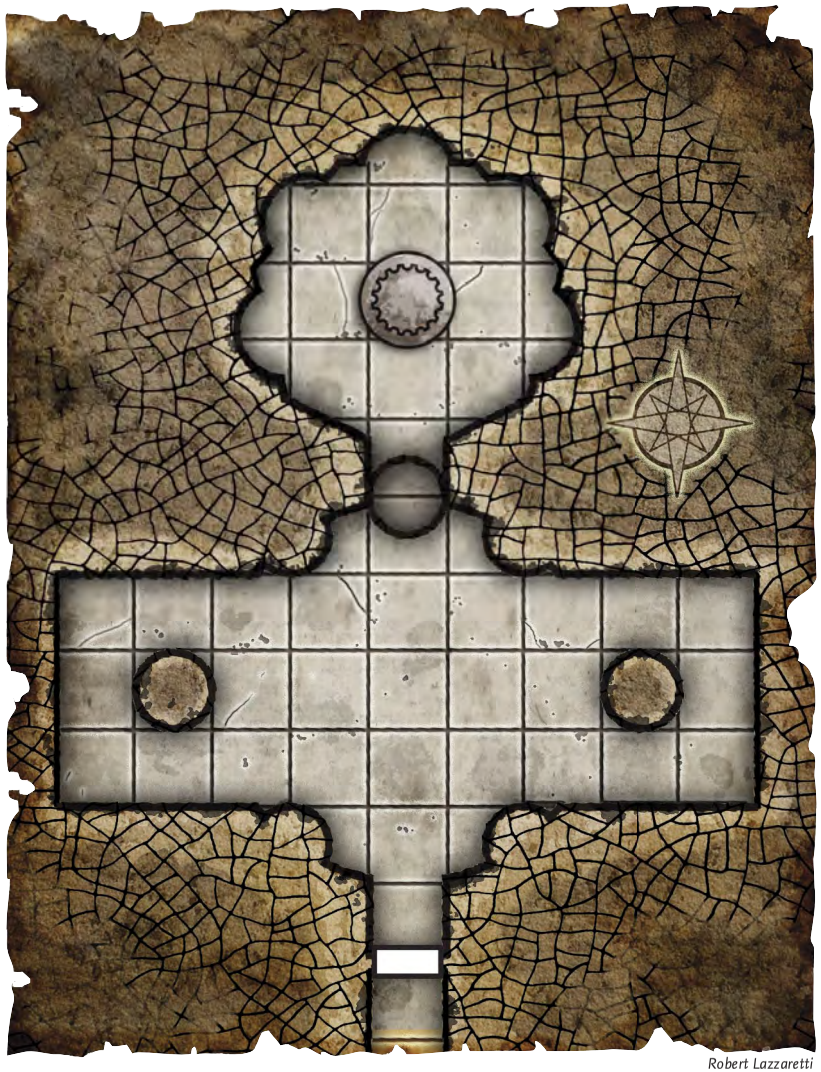

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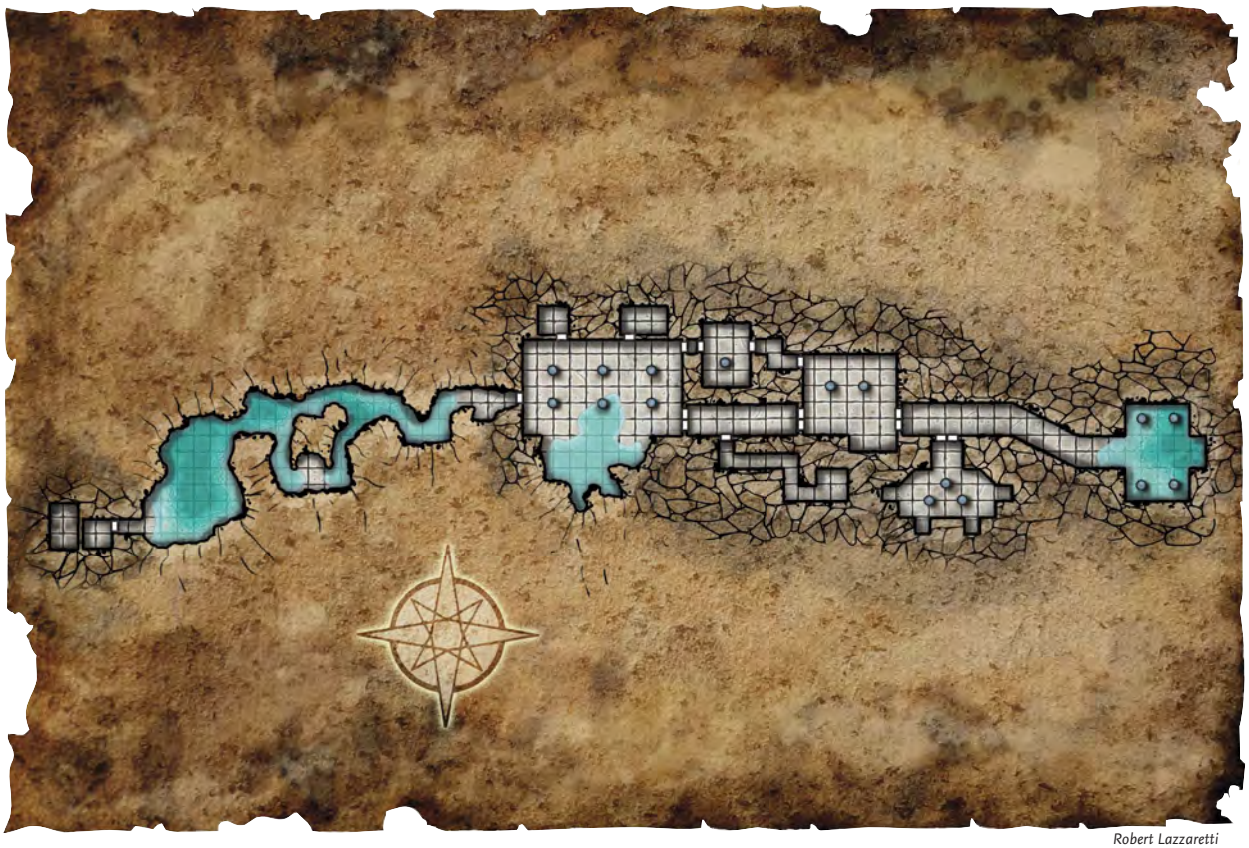

Robert Lazzaretti

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Handout #3

These bones once be Penkus, so if ye read this, I be dead, laid low by the sick put on me by that foul dead thing! Yet even as me flesh wracks, know t'was not the dead what brought my doom, but one I 'til recently called friend!

Vanthus Vanderboren! Your name fills me with bile! Spineless, treacherous cur! You left us here to die. You left ME here to die, after all what I done t'get ye into th'Lotus! Yer designs on the Lady of the Lotus be clear now, and with meself out th'way... ye doubtless move even now into power, slithering amid my vacancy like a hermit crab in a shell, or a cadaver worm to still-warm flesh. CURSE UPON YE!

To th'one what reads this. If ye have any honor or vengeance in yer soul, know that Vanthus must die. He dwells in the lap o' th'Lotus, below th'Taxidermist's Hall. Seek him there, but 'fore he dies he must ken it were Penkus what undid him and guides yer killing blow.

And if, by some cruel spite of fate, it be ye what read this, Vanthus, know with certainty I wait for ye in Hell, where I intend t'rival the pit itself in yer torment!

Handout #4

You are being watched by the Lotus Dragon. Your questions will bring you misery—it's best to sit back and let things happen as they will. Further interference will only bring you tears.

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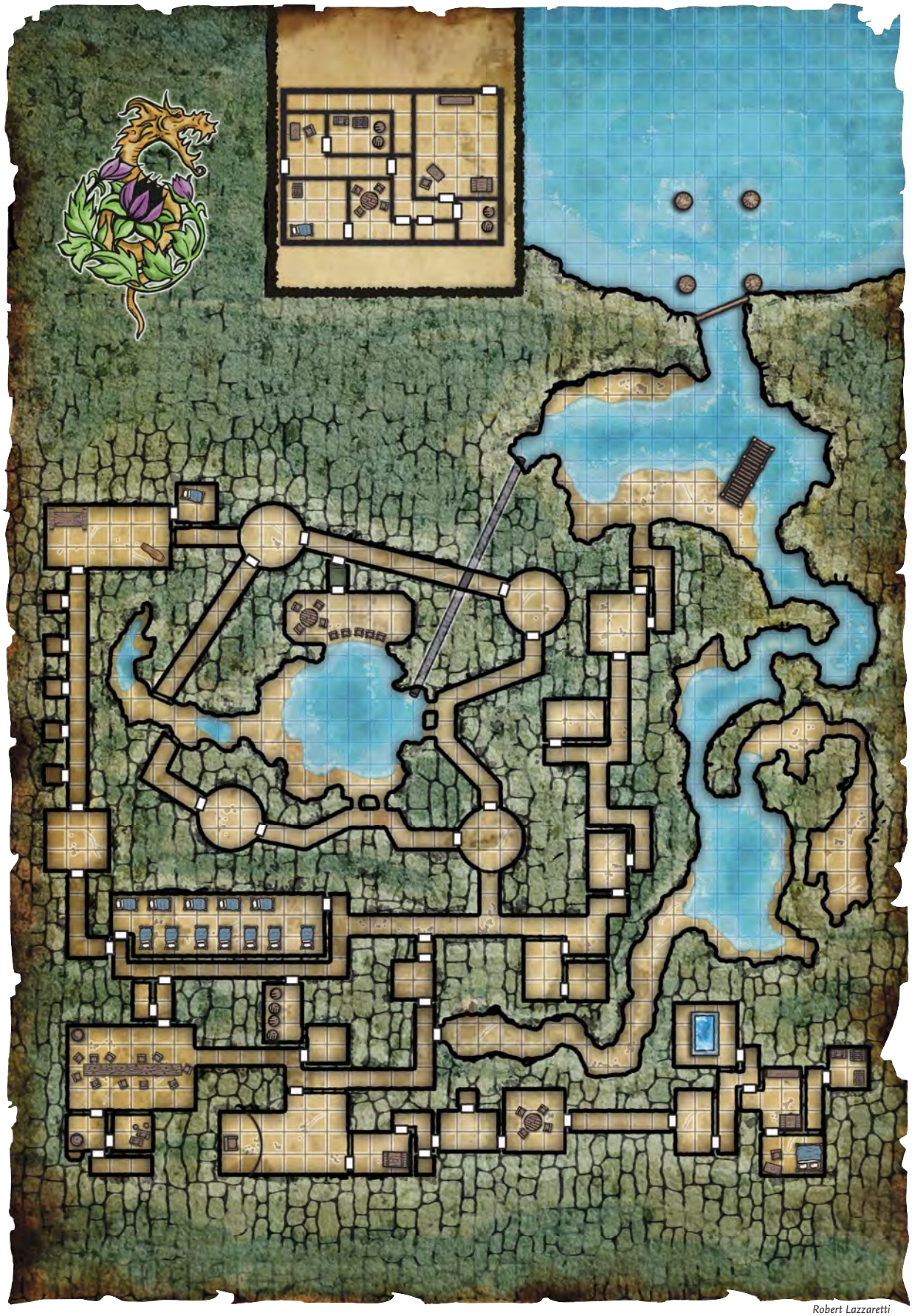

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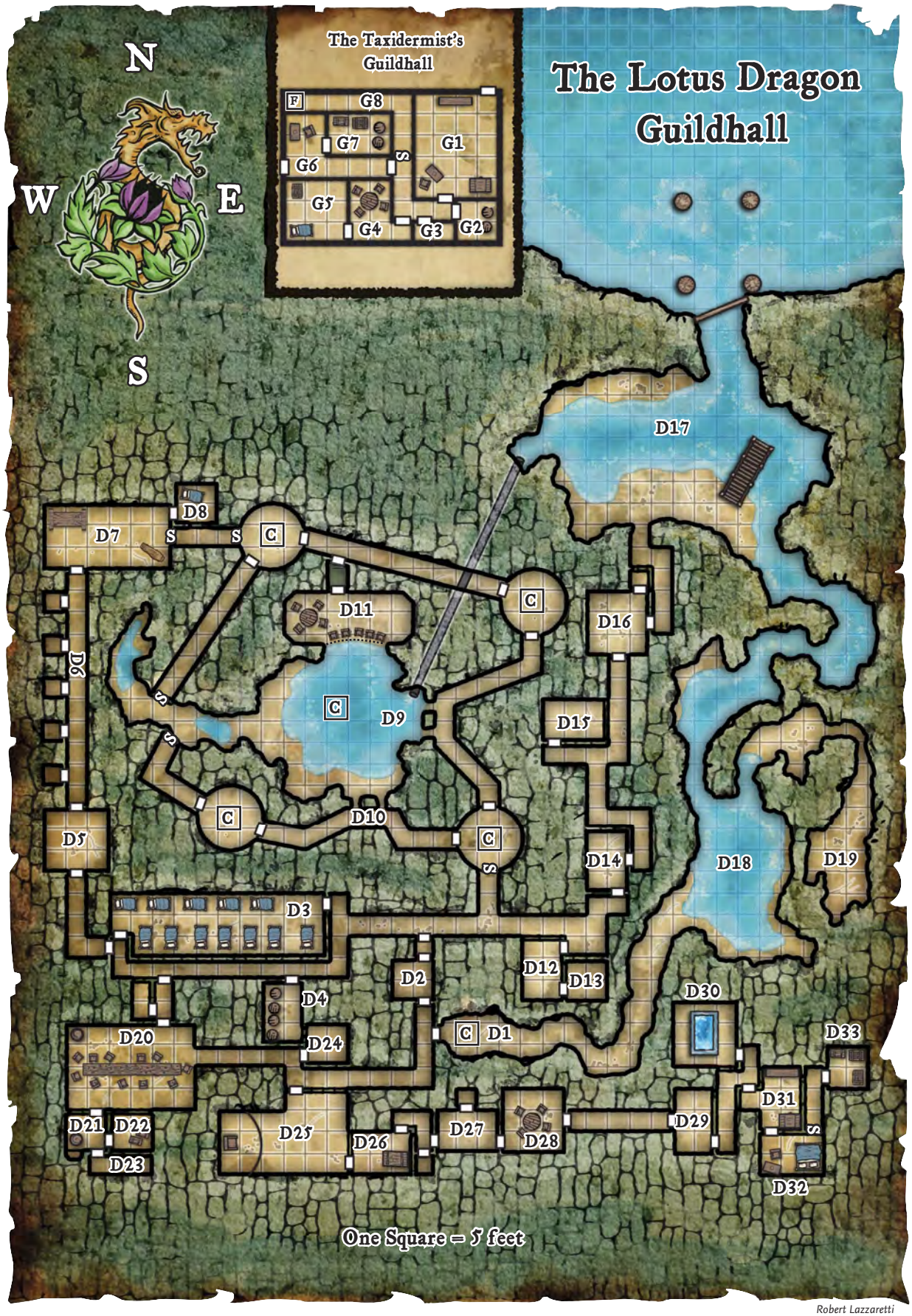

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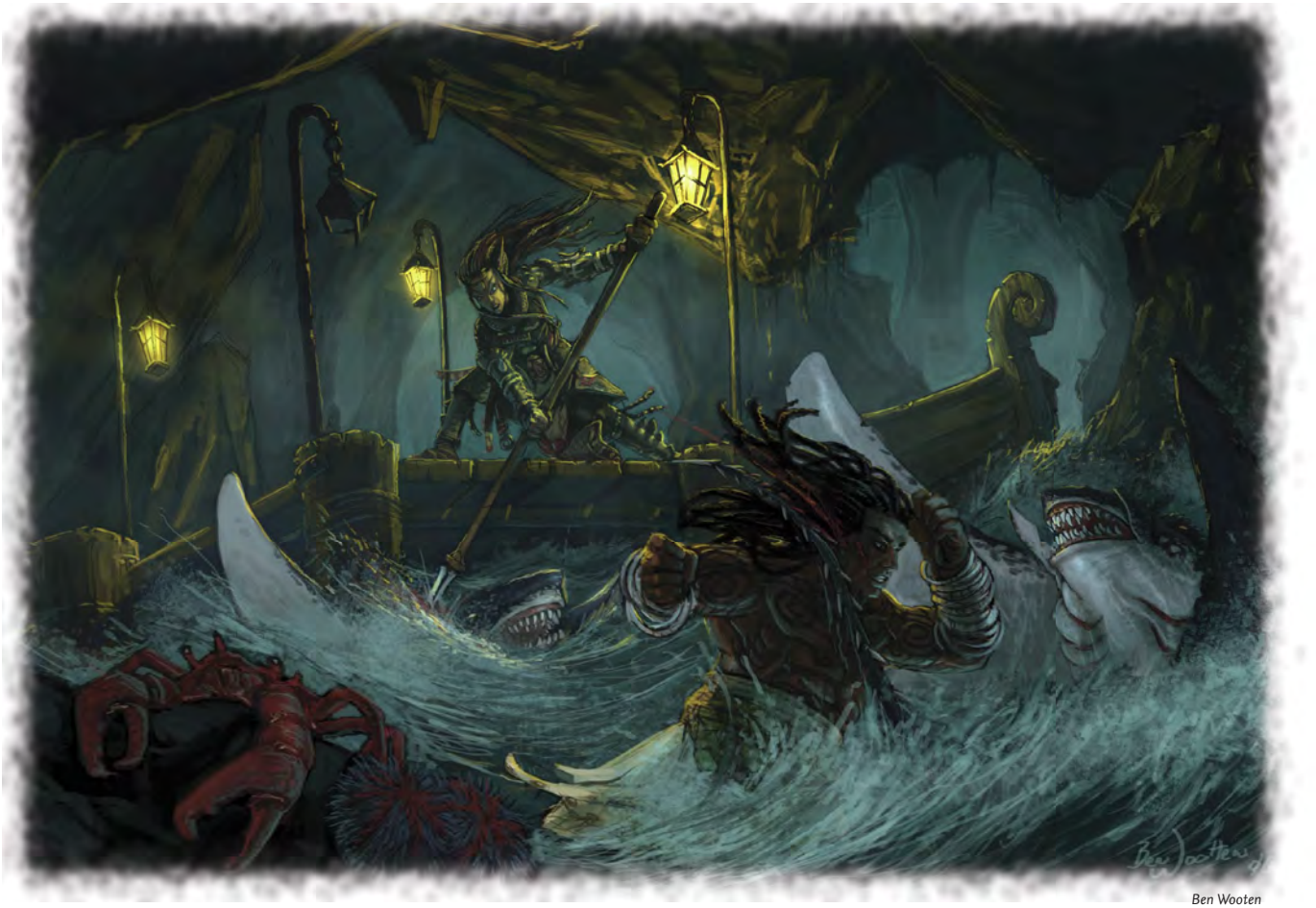
Ben Wooten

Nemien Roblach



Ben Wooten

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Rhagodessa

Ben Wooten

Rowyn and Gut Tugger

Ben Wooten

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Excerpts from Vanthus's Letters to Rowyn Kellani
(Dated 2 days before the fire that slew the elder Vanderborens)

"...My parents have grown soft. I'm not worried in the slightest that they suspect anything, my delicate flower. The funds you've trusted me with have been more than enough to pay off the local guards, the harbor watch, and the ship's crew to say nothing about the new cargo. Hell... they even offered to help load the barrels! Of course, I didn't tell them what was inside—I'm sure they'd sing a different song if they knew just how much alchemist's fire we loaded into the hold of my father's new plaything. I'll be following the ship's progress for a few days to make sure the fire does the trick, so you'll not be seeing me for at least half a week. Keep your bed warm for me!"

(Dated 3 days after the fire)

"...It's unbelievable! Sure, she's the eldest sibling, but she knows nothing of life! She spent the last half of her childhood in Thenalar learning how to fold napkins and play the violin, for Hell's sake! It just goes to show you how insane my parents really were... leaving everything in her care like that! Whatever. She'll need the house to live off of, I suppose. Lavinia's not a bad lass, really... I kind of miss our time together, to tell the truth. Think she'd be interested in joining the Lotus? I doubt it. And anyway, a second Vanderboren tragedy might get too many people curious. No, for now, whatever's in the vault will have to do..."

(Dated two days ago)

"...I really wish you could have been there, my little dragon, to see their faces before I closed the door! Lavinia's never going to get anywhere hiring fools like them. I wonder if they've found Penkus yet? I hope they didn't die too quickly."

"In any case, on to the purpose of this letter. Brissa's in the other room, getting ready for a night out on the town, so I'll have to be quick. Remember that thing she hinted about to me? About the pirates who were supposedly using Kraken's Cove as a base for their smuggling operation? Turns out she wasn't spinning tales—I've heard that they'll be arriving within the week with a particularly rich cargo. I'll bring her with me on the pretext of joining up with them, get their guard down, and when they're not expecting it my men'll light the ships on fire! It'll be a simple task to pluck the treasure from the water once all those fools are dead. Should be more than enough to make up for what we lost when Lavinia inherited rather than me."

"I tell you... burning people to death on their own boats? It's the best way to make money yet. Wish I'd thought of it years ago!"

Handout #5

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BACKDROP: SASSERINE

by James Jacobs

Discover the streets and canals of the city of Sasserine, the setting for the opening act of the Savage Tide Adventure Path.

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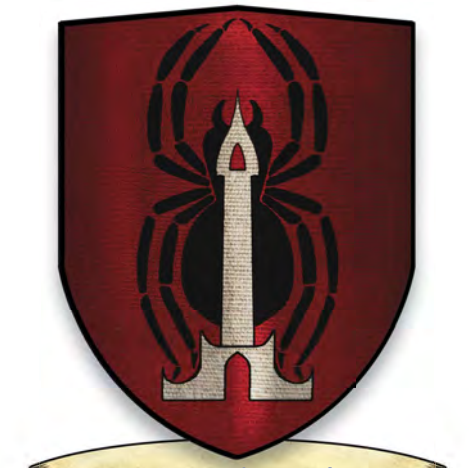

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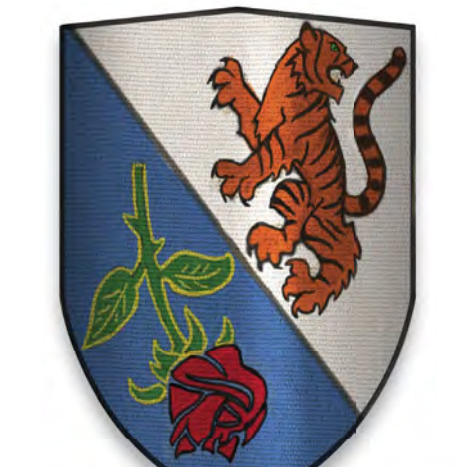

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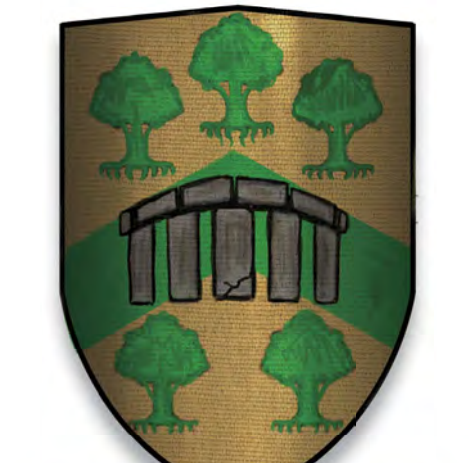

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REQUIEM OF THE SHADOW SERPENT

by Anson Caralya

Explore a warren of snake-haunted caverns where magic itself has lost its way and the faithful of Shar lurk in every corner. A Forgotten Realms adventure for 9th-level characters.

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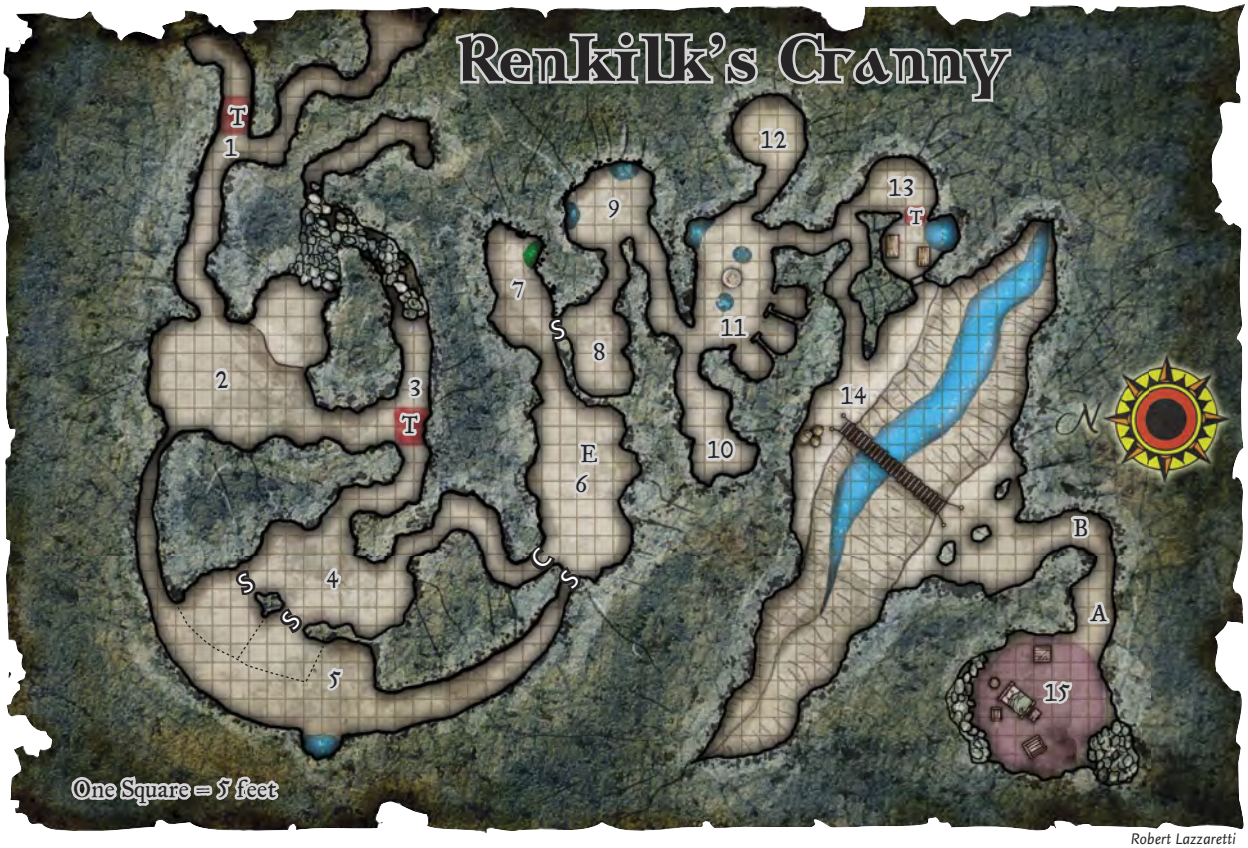

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MAURE CASTLE: THE GREATER HALLS

by Robert J. Kuntz

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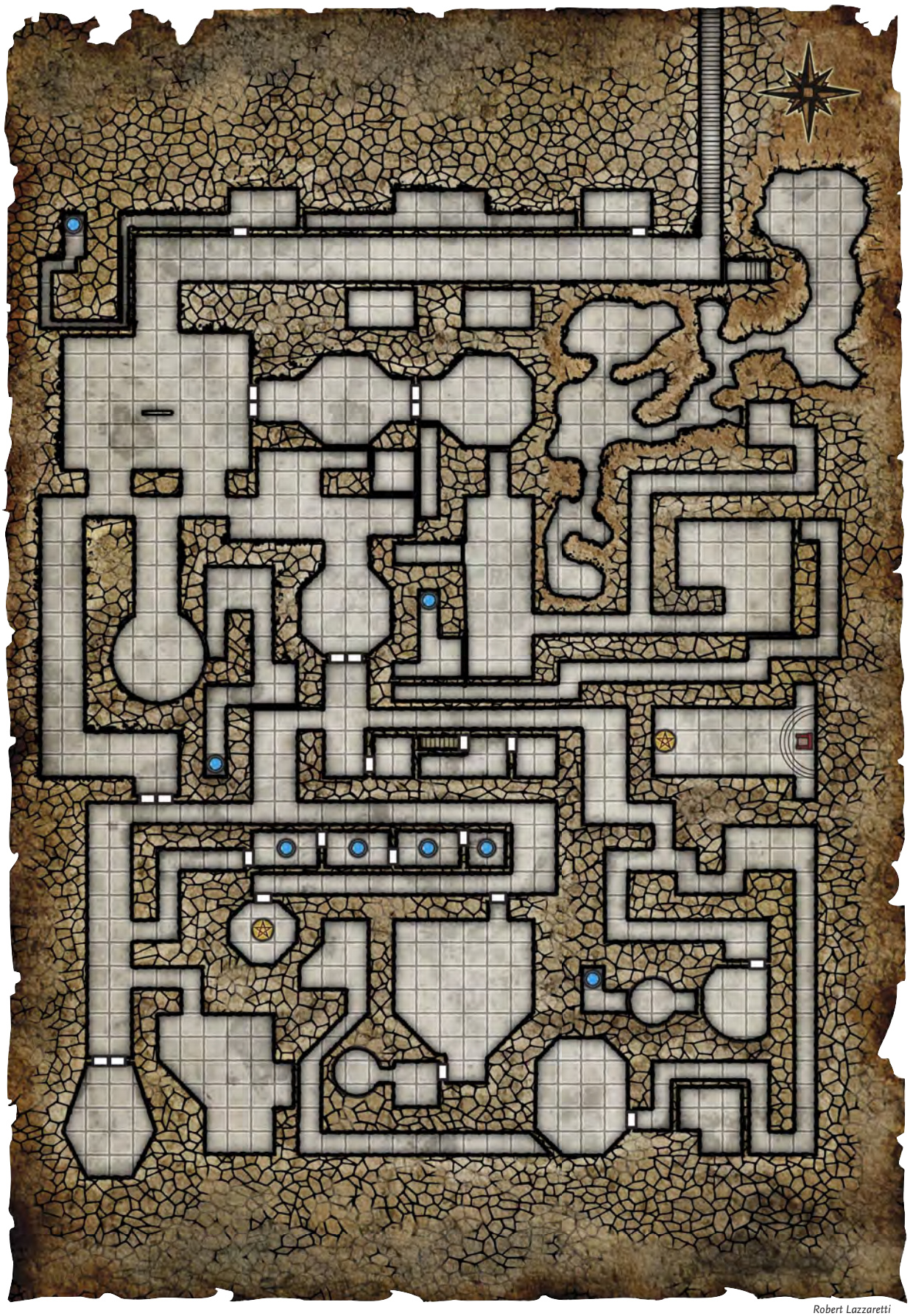

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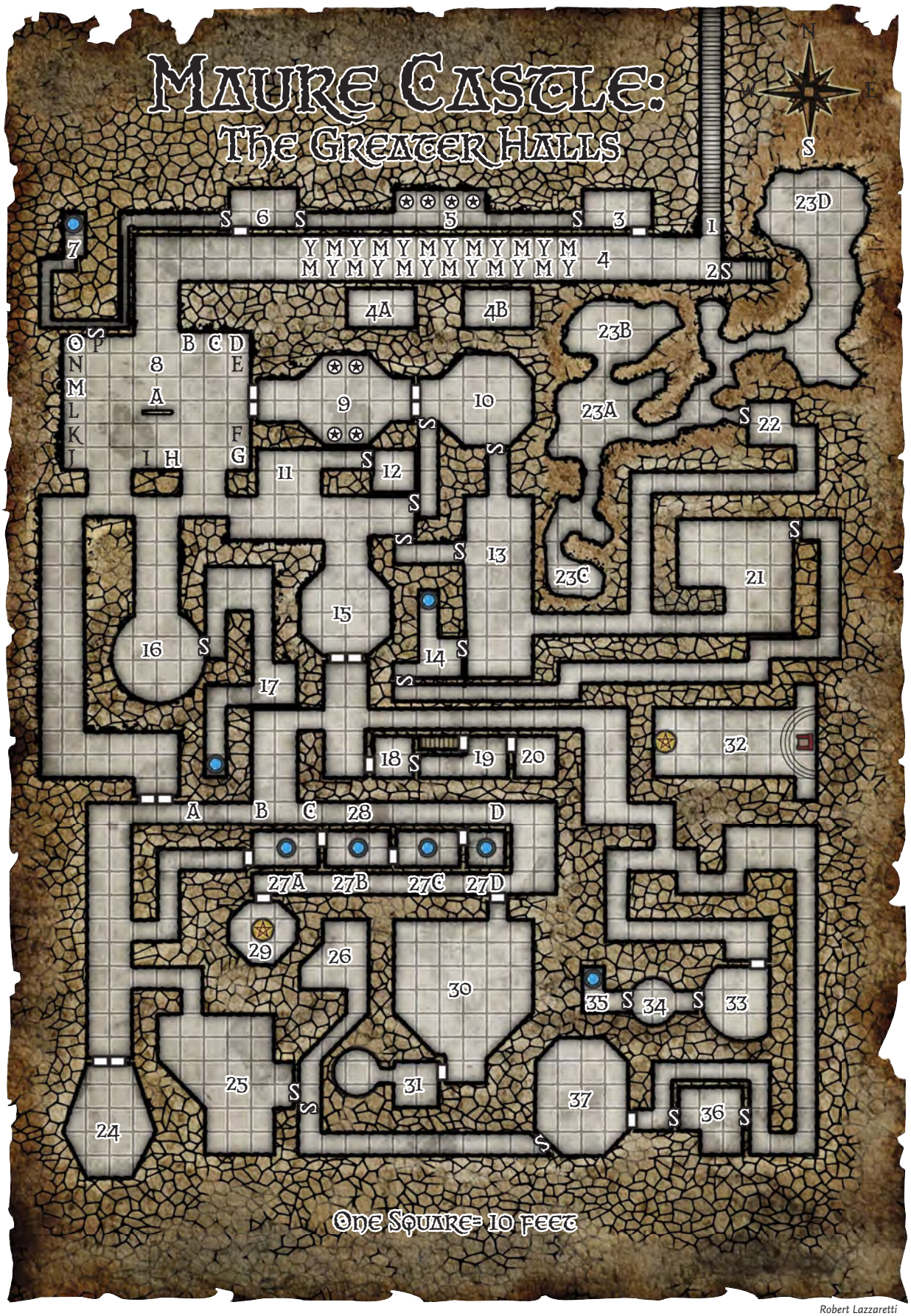

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Soul Demon

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Gigantus

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False Bersteck

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Mozul

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DARKMAIDEN'S DANCE
Merchant Caravel

Map of Mystery

Upper Deck & Rigging

Starboard Side
Rigging
Steps to Sterncastle Deck
Lateen Sails
Helm
Bowsprit
Prow
Stern
Sterncastle Deck
Port Side
Main Deck

Main Deck

Ballista
Rowboat
Steps to Crew Cabin
Galley
Trapdoor to Lower Deck
Ballista
Rowboat
Cargo Hatch
Captain's Stateroom
Rudder

Lower Deck

Hammocks
Ship's Provisions
Steps to Main Deck
Crew Cabin
S
Hidden Storage Closet
Cargo Hold
Trapdoor to Bilge Area
Passenger Cabin

1 square = 5 feet

WEST

Chris West

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